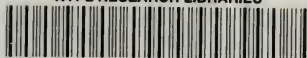


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Beauty in God's Word

By
Gerard B. F. Hallock D.D.

★ Publishers' Weekly

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BEAUTY IN GOD'S WORD



Beauty in God's Word

BY

GERARD B. F. HALLOCK, D. D.

*Author of "Upward Steps," "The Model Prayer," "God's
Whispered Secrets," etc.*

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may be-
hold wondrous things out of thy law."

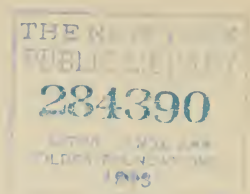
Ps. 119: 18.

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Introduction

In one of his helpful volumes the Rev. Dr. J. R. Miller tells of a young lady who purchased a book and read a few pages, yet failed to become interested in it. But some months afterwards, he goes on to relate, she met the author, and a tender friendship sprang up, ripening into love and betrothal. Then the book was dull no longer. Every sentence had a charm for her heart. Love was the interpreter.

Seeing beauty in God's word is much conditioned in the same way. The Bible has infinite value in itself; but to reveal its richest treasures it needs love as an interpreter. To those who do not know Christ personally it may seem uninteresting; but to those who know and love him its every page becomes like a casket of jewels glowing with beauty and light; yes, even better, like a letter of love, quickening the heart-throbs and filling the soul with rapture and with fresh and holy resolve.

This little book aims to take only a treasure text, a divine love-word, here and there, and hold it in the light until at least a little of its beauty shall be seen. The object is to send the beholder to a fresh study and appreciation of all the jewels in the treasure-chamber of our King.

G. B. F. H.

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I

KNOWING THE AUTHOR

Beauty in God's Word

Knowing the Author

"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day."
—Ps. 119: 97.

A young lady, asked by her friend to explain what is meant by devotional reading of the Bible, made answer as follows: "Yesterday morning I received a letter from one to whom I have given my heart and devoted my life. I freely confess to you that I have read that letter five times, not because I did not understand it at the first reading, nor because I expected to commend myself to the author by frequent reading of his epistle. It was not with me a question of duty, but simply one of pleasure. I read it because I am devoted to him who wrote it. To read the Bible with the same motive is to read it devotionally, and to one who reads it in that spirit it is indeed a love letter."

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This young Christian's explanation is beautifully clear and satisfying, and shows a soul with deep spiritual insight. The heart certainly has not a little to do in rightly interpreting God's word.

One important element in devotional reading of the Bible is attention. "Most people," says Martin Boos, "read their Bibles like cows that stand in the thick grass, and trample under their feet the finest flowers and herbs." It is easy to make this mistake. In his helpful little book, *Pleasure and Profit of Bible Study*, Mr. Moody says: "I used at one time to read so many chapters a day, and if I did not get through my usual quantity I thought I was getting cold and backsliding. But, mind you, if a man had asked me two hours afterwards what I had read I could not have told him; I had forgotten it nearly all. When I was a boy I used, among other things, to hoe corn on a farm, and I used to hoe it so badly, in order to get over so much ground, that at night I had to put down a stake in the ground so as to know the next morning where I had left off. That was somewhat in the same fashion as running through so many chapters a day."

There are not a few Christians who make the mistake Mr. Moody was referring to. Far too many Christians, in their devotional reading of the Bible, read so hastily and with so little attention that they need to put a mark in order to remind

Knowing the Author

them if they have read a certain distance, and to prevent them from reading the same chapter over and over again without knowing it. We may call that studying the Bible, but it is not.

Another element in a devotional study of God's word is meditation. Andrew Bonar tells of a simple Christian in a farmhouse who had "*meditated the Bible through three times.*" This is precisely what the Psalmist had done. He had gone past reading into meditation. Like Luther, he "had shaken every tree in God's garden, and gathered fruit therefrom." The idea of meditation is "to get into the middle of a thing." Meditation is to the mind what digestion is to the body. Unless the food be digested the body receives no benefit from it. If we would derive the fullest benefit from what we read or hear there must be that mental digestion known as meditation. If we would "buy the truth" we must pay the price which Paul had reference to when he wrote to Timothy, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them." David meditated on God's word because he loved it, and he loved it the more because he meditated on it. He said, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." He prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Another element in a truly devotional study of the Bible is an humble desire toward the truth, or

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teachableness. The Bible cannot reveal its beauties to those who are self-sufficient and conceited, so filled with intellectual pride that they are not willing, in a teachable spirit, to hear God speak.

But, as we intimated in the beginning, the main prerequisite to a devotional study of the Bible is love for the Author. Love for the Author sends us to the Book, and the reading of the Book increases our love for the Author.

Besides, it is the one who knows the Author who gets the real purpose and meaning of the message the Author sends. The one who knows Christ can interpret him far better than the greatest scholar who does not know him.

"I do not agree with you about the meaning of that poem," said one friend to another, with her finger upon a page of Browning.

"But you must agree with me," said he, "because I knew Browning personally, and therefore am able to interpret him to you."

Only a little later this boastful friend of the poet began to chaff the lady upon what he called her superstitious belief in the Bible, calling it a pack of fables.

"Ah! now," she said, gently, "you must give way to me about this Book. Remember, I know the Author!"

And herein lies a startling truth; only those who know the voice of God in their souls can

Knowing the Author

recognize it in his word. Learn to know the Author in order to truly know the Book, and study continually the Book that you may know the Author better.

II

The Secret of the Lord

The Secret of the Lord

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.”—Ps. 25 : 14.

There is a beautiful figure of speech in this verse. The term rendered “secret” is in the original Hebrew tongue “a whisper.” When a humble and teachable soul is near to God, he often tells a secret to it. He whispers in the Christian’s ear some sweet word of promise or assurance of his love which no one else can hear, perhaps which no one else could understand. God has many precious things to say to all those who will attentively listen to his voice.

Walking with God is the best way to know the mind of God; friends who walk together impart their secrets to each other. Noah walked with God, and God revealed a great secret to him, about his intended destroying of the old world and saving him in the ark. Abraham walked with God, and God took him into the most intimate relation, saying, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” There are Christians to-day who walk with God, and how often he sweetly unbosoms himself to them, at the time

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of prayer, in the quiet hour of spiritual meditation and communion, while pondering his word, or in the holy supper, as when Jesus made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread !

Some read the verse, "The friendship of the Lord," etc. But this does not change the meaning in the least. It signifies familiar intercourse, confidential intimacy, select fellowship, a closeness of relationship in which many secrets are imparted that others do not hear.

What are some of the secrets God imparts to those who fear him? One of them is expressed in the closing clause of the verse we have quoted: "He will show them his covenant." As a devout interpreter says, "Its antiquity, security, righteousness, fullness, graciousness, and excellence, shall be revealed to their hearts and understandings, and, above all, their own part in it shall be sealed to their hearts by the witness of the Holy Spirit." There is a vital sense in which "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God," and in which all the realities of Christian experience are utterly hid from his perceptions. To speak to some men about communion with God, or the sense of pardon, or the lively expectation of heaven, or the witness of the Holy Ghost, or the struggles of the spiritual life, would be like reasoning with a blind man about colors or one deaf about musical harmony. But God does reveal these things, what they are, what they

The Secret of the Lord

mean, and makes real the blessed experience of them, to those who are willing to walk with him. In other words, salvation itself, the "mystery of godliness," is one of the secrets God imparts to those who are willing to become his friends.

Another of these secrets God imparts to his followers is the meaning of his word. To many the Bible is a book of enigmas, a volume of "dark sayings," which they cannot understand. But just as a lover can "read between the lines" in the letter he receives, so through the gift of the Holy Spirit, even the "deep things of God" become plain and full of helpfulness and comforting assurance to the soul that is in touch with God, having "the mind of the Spirit." How much the Bible means to those who are Christians! And among Christians, how much more it means to some than to others! How wise are those who come into such intimacy with God that he can impart his secrets to them!

Still another of the many secrets God imparts to those who live in fellowship with him is that of guidance. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." "The Lord shall guide thee continually." These and such as

Beauty in God's Word

these are the promises God fulfills to those who listen for his voice, who are alert to understand his providences, and are ready to follow his leadings. We know how Abraham left kindred and country and started, with no other guide than God, across a trackless desert to a land which he never had seen. We know how Joshua, in entering the Land of Promise, was able to cope with the difficulties of an unknown region, and to overcome great and warlike nations, because he constantly looked to the Lord of Hosts, who ever leads to victory. We know how, in the early Church, the apostles were enabled to thread their way through the most difficult questions, and to solve the most perplexing problems, laying down principles which will guide the Church to the end of time, all because it was revealed to them by the Holy Spirit what they should do and say. God is no less the guardian and pilot of his people still, and his secret of guidance is, as of old, "with them that fear him."

Only one other of the secrets God makes known to his followers we will mention—that of the meaning and the blessedness of heaven. The reason God is able to reveal this secret to those who live in close fellowship with him is because heaven is something that begins for them here and now. It is the same heaven in both worlds. The only difference is one of degree. "Lay hold on eternal life." It is something for us to get hold

The Secret of the Lord

of, here and now. It is a thing of the future ; but it is a thing of the present, too, and even that part of it which is future can be so realized and grasped by faith as actually to be enjoyed while we are in the flesh. "The kingdom of God is within you." It was said of an old Puritan, "Heaven was in him before he was in heaven." A devout Scotchman being asked if he ever expected to go to heaven, gave the quaint reply : "Why, mon, I live there !" All the way to heaven is heaven begun to the Christian who walks near enough to God to hear the secrets he has to impart. There is such a thing as having an inner heaven in the heart. "The kingdom of God is within you." Pardon, peace, rest of soul, assurance of hope, abounding joy, and grace beyond measure, these and such as these are the experiences, even as they journey toward the gates of the celestial city, of all who walk so near to God that he can impart his secrets to them.

It is worth our while to cultivate this grace of intercourse with God. The effect is as when one looks at the sun. You gaze a little time at the sun, then look back again about you on the earth, and everywhere you will see the sun. Up the street, in yonder doorway, among the hurrying people ; you seem to have brought the sun down by your look, and now you see it all about you. The same thing is what happens, too, child of God, when you recognize the value of com-

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munion with him and give yourself pause in the hurry of life long enough to look into his face. By so doing you bring him down into your immediate surroundings, not to dazzle, but to cheer, guide, and bless you. In the midst of the thronging people who press upon your daily life, when you enter the doorway of your office, store, or shop, or among those in your own home, everywhere you see God, you are conscious of his presence, and walk with his light irradiating the whole horizon of your activities. In fact, you have entered into his secret because you are one of those who fear him. Very blessed are all they who will come into such experience. It is available for all who are willing to "dwell in the secret place of the Most High," and so "abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

"In the secret of his presence how my soul delights to hide !
Oh, how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus' side !

Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low ;
For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place
I go.

* * * * *

"Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord ?

Go and hide beneath his shadow : this shall then be your reward ;

And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting place,

You must mind and bear the image of the Master in your face."

III

Treasures Hidden in God's Word

Treasures Hidden in God's Word

"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."—Ps. 119: 18.

In the Dresden gallery of royal gems there is a silver egg ; touch a spring, and it opens, disclosing a golden chicken ; touch the chicken, and it opens, disclosing a crown studded with gems ; touch the crown, and it opens, disclosing a magnificent diamond ring. So it is with the Bible ; as we study it we touch successive springs, disclosing exhaustless treasures. We have reason to pray, with the Psalmist, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." This expression of the Psalmist means literally, "Unveil thou mine eyes." The "law" represents the Scriptures. To the unveiled vision of the believer the word of God presents ever-increasing revelations of beauty, richer than the gems from any royal gallery.

The human mind delights in wondrous things. There certainly are wonders in God's word ; things challenging our highest admiration ; things overawing us with sublimity ; things unfathomable in love and beauty and grace. There are wonders

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of God, wonders of his wisdom, wonders of his power, wonders of his holiness, wonders of his justice, wonders of his goodness, and wonders of his truth. There are wonders of man, of his ruin, and of his rescue—wonders of redemption. “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

To these wonders the natural man is blinded. It is not on account of a lack of natural capacity, but sin and selfishness and carnality veil the vision. The eye exists, but it sees not clearly. We are naturally blind to the true beauties of God and of his word, and to the highest verities of religion. Much that is in fact intellectually known by us is not spiritually apprehended or appreciated.

We have read of a young boy who was born blind. An operation was performed, and the light was let in slowly. One day his mother led him out of doors and uncovered his eyes. For the first time he saw the sky and the earth and the flowers. “Oh, mother!” he cried, “why didn’t you tell me it was so beautiful?” In strong emotion she replied, “I tried to tell you, dear, but you could not understand me.” So it is when we try to tell what wondrous things are in the Bible; unless the spiritual vision is opened, our hearers cannot understand.

What are some of the things that veil the eyes?

Treasures Hidden in God's Word

There are many who care nothing for God's word. They see no beauty in it that they should desire it. There are causes, often deliberately encouraged by them, that only aggravate their spiritual blindness. One of these is neglect. The fish in the Mammoth Cave lost their eyes by not using them. Some people so seldom look into God's word that they gradually lose all aptitude for seeing the beauty it contains. Another cause is prejudice. Some people are so prejudiced against God's word that they never for one moment give it candid attention. Their eyes are veiled by their prejudices. Another cause is intellectual pride. The Bible cannot reveal its beauties to those who think they know more than God does, and are not willing in teachable spirit to hear him speak. God hides these things from the self-thought wise and prudent, and reveals them to babes. Another cause is indulgence in sin. Permitted sin gradually draws a veil over the eyes. But God himself is the Physician to whom we should appeal. "Open thou mine eyes." He is the Divine Oculist to whom we should go. If our eye be abnormal, or diseased, or dim of vision, we cannot treat ourselves, for it needs a well eye to examine it and operate upon it. As the blind men met Christ in the way and called out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" so should we take up the prayer of the Psalmist and call out in our spiritual blindness, "Open thou

Beauty in God's Word

mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

An artist was once studying a curious work of art, and became so absorbed in the contemplation as to forget all else about him. A spectator, observing him, asked what pleasure he could take in gazing so long on what seemed to him so indifferent an object. "Hadst thou mine eyes," was the reply, "thou wouldst be as much ravished as I am." The fault is with our eyes, our habits, our training, our lack of heart preparation for seeing beauty in God's word. Do we not need to have our eyes opened that we may behold wondrous things out of God's law?

What are some of the wondrous things to be seen? To the unveiled vision, what beauty there is in God's word! To the heart in touch with God every page is a letter of love, filled with the accents of his voice, and beautiful with the reflections of his mind. An open eye means an illuminated page. To the unveiled vision what wondrous things, indeed, are seen—wondrous things as to the depths of God's love, wondrous things as to his forgiving mercy, wondrous things concerning his saving grace, concerning his never-failing help, concerning the home he has prepared for all those that love him, and regarding the blessedness of an eternity spent under the smile of his presence! "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

IV

Becoming Beautiful

Becoming Beautiful

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord."—II Cor. 3 : 18.

A returned missionary, who had lived many years in a heathen land, said that what impressed him most when he came back to America was not the stately buildings, the mechanical improvements on every hand, or the handsome girls and young women, but the beautiful old ladies. Heathen women grow ugly as they grow old. This he attributed not so much to hard work as to a vacant mind and unimproved heart. The reverse is often seen in our country. Not that certain charms which belong to youth can be retained with advancing years, but other and better ones replace them. There certainly is a "beauty of holiness" which is often seen in the face of the aged saint. It is said of God's redeemed ones, "His name shall be in their foreheads." Have we not seen it even here, written on the brow of some sweet and lovely Christian while yet in the flesh?

How is character thus transformed? It is by

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“beholding.” Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the image of the glory—that is, to those who find the likeness of Christ and look upon, ponder it, they grow into likeness to Christ. Something of the glory of his face passes into their faces and stays there, and shines out so that others see it.

We well know the influence on our natures of things we look upon familiarly and constantly. A man sits before the photographer's camera, and the image of his face prints itself upon the glass in the darkened chamber of the instrument. Something much like this process is going on continually in every human soul. The only difference is that the man himself is the camera, and the things that pass before his contemplation cast their images within him and print their pictures on his very nature, his soul.

Hawthorne, in his story, *The Great Stone Face*, illustrates how this transformation takes place. The boy of whom the story was told had been accustomed to see on the side of the mountain the clear-cut face, with dignity and benignity on the features, and was told that some day there would come to the village a man resembling this stone face, and that he would prove to be the greatest friend and benefactor of the people. The boy studied the face of each stranger who came to the valley to see if he might not be the coming benefactor. Time and again he was disappointed.

Becoming Beautiful

The rich man did not resemble the stone face. The great scholar did not have the features he knew so well. One after another, for successive years, came short of the resemblance, but still the boy held on to the faith that the great benefactor, looking like the stone face, would come to bless them.

As the thought brooded in the boy's mind he was led to idealize the character of the man who should come. He conceived that he must be lofty in his thoughts, serene in his faith, pure in his character, gentle and kind and tender to the people, and as he thought of all these desirable qualities he began to take them on himself. He grew more and more gentle to all, thoughtful, considerate and helpful, manly and full of sweet-heartedness which took the form of unmistakable dignity and kindness. The years went by, and as his hair whitened and his face took on more and more the thought and character of the man, the people of the valley came to realize that he who was the friend and counselor of them all was the very image of the stone face, and the benefactor and friend who was already come to them.

The place where the likeness of Christ is shown is in the word of God. This is the mirror where he is reflected. When anyone turns to the New Testament and looks upon the life of Christ as it is portrayed there in its gentleness, its purity, its tender compassion, he will grow like Christ, and

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others will see in that one a purity and a beauty and a goodness, too, that will remind them of the Master.

We have read of a little child who had been thinking about the unseen Christ to whom she prayed. She was trying to picture to herself what he might be like. By and by she came to her mother with the question, "Is Jesus like anybody I know?" The question was not an unreasonable one, and it was one to which the child should have received the answer, "Yes." Every true disciple of Christ ought to be an answer, in some sense, at least, to that child's inquiry. Every little child ought to see Christ's beauty mirrored in its mother's face. Yes, and this privilege should not be limited to the children of good mothers, but ought to be enjoyed by everyone who anywhere looks upon a Christian.

The transforming agent is the Holy Spirit. We are changed into his image, "even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Spirit usually uses the word of God.

The transformation is progressive in its nature. It is "from glory to glory," from one degree of character to a higher,—from one degree of spiritual beauty to a higher. It is a gradual growth. A Christian is sure to grow lovely by just loving,—by just going on in love for Christ. It has been fabled from old times that the graceful swan was changed from a most ugly bird into its

Becoming Beautiful

present beauty, merely because of its constancy to its mate. But oh, how Christian fact is sure to outrun classic fable ! The soul grows wondrously lovely just by loving, by pouring out its faithful affection ; and all the more so when the object of its affection is the Lord Jesus Christ, the One altogether lovely. We behold his face, Jesus' face, as in a mirror, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But the result is permanent. The soul gets more and more set in the way of holiness,—in the beauty that holiness brings. “Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

V

Spiritual Strategy

Spiritual Strategy

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."--
Rom. 12 : 21.

It is hard to get sin out of our lives by main force. The better way is to use the wise strategy of overcoming evil with good. Let us notice how it works.

We all are conscious of being frequently beset with evil thoughts. There are sights taken in through the senses to suggest them. There is evil from without to force them upon us. There are laws of association by which, when we think of one thing, some other thing, possibly evil, is suggested.

When does an evil thought become personally a sinful thought? The old theologians used to analyze this subject under three heads. First, suggestion ; second, delectation ; third, consent. Under the first head even Christ had suggestions to evil. Satan tempted him with the suggestion of turning stones into bread, and of casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Mere suggestion is not sinful, but our thoughts become sinful at the point of delectation. When Mr.

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Evil Thought comes along and knocks at the door of the heart, and we say, "Come in ; I am glad to see you ; take a chair ; don't be in a hurry ; don't go"—when anyone is in this attitude toward evil thoughts he is in a sinful attitude. "You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head, but while you have hands you can keep them from building nests in your hair." We are responsible for harboring evil thoughts even though we will not consent to the deed they suggest.

How, then, are we to manage evil thoughts? We may set our teeth and say, with determination, "I will not harbor them." But we can hardly keep up such a determination. We will find it difficult work. Such stiff courage will fail by and by. There is a better way. Fill your mind with the things that are good and beautiful and true, and the evil will find no place in you. By this strategy you will not be overcome of evil, but will overcome evil with good.

Much criticism is made of the reading people choose in these days. Some seem to think they can afford to occupy their time in reading books that, in their secret hearts, they know are evil. People will read. If unworthy books are on hand, we are liable to occupy our time with them, and thus create a taste for such trash. Especially in dealing with children and young people ought we to recognize the value of strategy. Possession is by

Spiritual Strategy

dispossession. Put in the good and the evil will be kept out. Use strategy.

We may apply the same thought to our daily occupations and every department of life. Let us remember that our souls are like a picture gallery. If we cover the walls of them with things noble and beautiful and pure, the foul and fleshly will only seem revolting. "Hang this upon the wall of your room," said a wise picture dealer to an Oxford undergraduate, as he handed him an engraving of a Madonna of Raphael, "and then all the pictures of jockeys and ballet girls will disappear." Let us try the same experiment with our souls. Let their walls be hung with all things pure and perfect—the thought of God, the image of Christ, the lives of God's saints, the inspirations of good and great men, the memories of golden deeds, the noble passages of poetic thought, scenes of mountain and sunset and ocean. If we will do this, there will be no room for the things that defile and debauch. When a bottle is full of water you cannot pour oil into it. The best way for us to resist temptation is to leave no room for it in our hearts. The best way for us to fortify our children against the evil that is in the world is to have their affections occupied with the truth of God and the love of the good. The best way of resisting evil is by overcoming it with good.

Apply the thought again to our pleasure seeking. It is foolish to tell people not to indulge in this

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pleasure or that, and fail to suggest some other pleasure to take its place. It is especially foolish to make our instruction of the young a series of don'ts. Here again possession is by dispossession. Put in the good, and the evil will be kept out. We once saw Mr. Moody hold a glass before an audience and say: "How am I to get the air out of this glass?" No one answered. He turned, and from a pitcher poured the glass to overflowing with water. "Now," said he, "the air is all out." Let us learn the strategy. Put in good. Give young people plenty of pleasure, but let it be pure and wholesome pleasure, and they will not seek that which is evil. Give them plenty to do that is useful and true, and the evil will be kept out. Possession is by dispossession. Use spiritual strategy.

VI

“The Commandments Set to Music”

“The Commandments Set to Music”

“Love is the fulfilling of the law.”—Rom. 13 : 10.

“The love of Christ constraineth us.”—II Cor. 5 : 14.

Christ and his apostles did not furnish us with specific rules for the government of our conduct in all the relations of life. Plainly, it would have been almost impossible for them to have done so. This cannot be done in human laws. The attempt has been made to meet the inventive versatility of fraud by a corresponding versatility in the enactment of laws. The result is that the laws have multiplied so rapidly in many of our States that they are involved in almost inextricable confusion. We are told that the Arabian commentators of Mahomet attempted to make a law applicable to every relation of life. They published, it is said, a code containing seventy-five thousand rules. But cases soon arose to which none of these rules would apply. But the New Testament adopts a very different method. It has very little of “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not.” Instead, it deals in broad fundamental principles capable of universal application. It gives us in plain words a law of love. It sets before us, in Christ, a life of

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love. It concedes that God wrote "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" on the tables of stone, but it goes on to tell us that Christ himself taught that "love is the fulfilling of the law."

"Love is the commandments set to music." This is a beautiful and meaningful expression some one has used. It is as true as it is beautiful. For, as some one else has said, "To obey God as a machine works is neither beautiful nor inspiring. To keep his law because of a coming reward, or to avoid a possible punishment, is as soulless and sordid as any other effort merely for the sake of gain. But suppose the commandments are 'set to music,' that love watches for indications of his slightest wish, and then runs to accomplish it? Suppose that each of us could say that it is our meat and drink to do the will of the Father? What music would sound through these busy days of ours!"

Love is the peerless queen among the graces. It has been called "the abridgment of the law, the new precept of the gospel." Luther calls it "the shortest and the longest divinity; short for the form of words; long, yea, everlasting, for the use and practice, for 'Charity shall never cease.'"

Love has a wonderful constraining influence. It is under this influence we are led to enter the Christian life. It is when we realize the love of Christ as we see him lifted on the cross for our salvation that we yield our hearts to him. The

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history of every conversion is portrayed in these words of Watts :—

“ Alas ! and did my Saviour bleed,
And did my Sovereign die ?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I ?

“ Was it for crimes that I have done,
He groaned upon the tree ?
Amazing pity, Grace unknown,
And love beyond degree ! ”

Seeing the love-sacrifice, the soul then resolves :

“ But drops of grief can ne’er repay
The debt of love I owe ;
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do ! ”

It is under this constraining influence we are moved to confess Christ's name and unite with his people. An army surgeon bound up a broken artery and saved a soldier's life. The soldier asked the surgeon's name, saying he wanted to tell his wife and children who it was that saved him from death. A little boy, whose life had been brought back largely by the careful and tender attentions of a nurse, on being discharged from the hospital, threw his arms about the nurse's neck and exclaimed, “ My mother will never hear the last of you ! ” So it is when Christ comes to us binding up our broken hearts, healing our

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wounded spirits and saving our dying souls ; constrained by love to him and gratitude for our salvation we long to confess him before men and to join with those who love and serve him.

It is under this constraining influence we are moved to battle bravely against sin and to try to grow in purity and holiness and usefulness of life. It is through this constraining motive that martyrs are made and all displays of Christian heroism are manifested. Love is the impelling motive back of all self-sacrifice and labor for Christ. The love-constrained Christian does not give up sinful indulgences because he must, but because he delights to do Christ's will. He is glad to deny himself for Christ's sake. Self-sacrifice becomes actual pleasure and work for Christ his highest joy. The love-constrained Christian realizes Christ's desire for souls, and he therefore tries to win many to him. He also knows of Christ's longing for the extension of his kingdom, and therefore gives according to his ability for the spread of the gospel ; Christ's interests become his interests, Christ's cause his cause, Christ's glory his glory, under the sweet, compelling constraint of love.

Love is the commandments set to music. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "The love of Christ constraineth us."

VII

The Key to Christian Truth

The Key to Christian Truth

“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.”—John 7 : 17.

It was a frivolous question those Jews raised who approached Christ. The question was not whether there was anything in his teaching worthy their attention, but the trivial inquiry as to how he came to his knowledge. Christ quickly turned their minds to a weightier matter as to whose the teaching was, saying, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.” To their implied inquiry as to how they should know the truth of his teachings, how test the reliability of his doctrine, he answered: “By experiment. Practice the teaching and it will vindicate itself as divine.” Christ thus puts practice before knowledge and as a means to it. He says that the first step toward knowing the teaching of God is a submissive will and a readiness to test it by practicing it.

Herein, then, is revealed the way to Christian knowledge, the key to Christian truth. It is found in a submissive and obedient spirit. Some would say that the origin of spiritual knowledge is in cultivated intelligence. But Christ said, “Not so, but

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in trained affections and habits of obedience." How shall we know truth? "Study," said the Jews. "Study," say many in our own day. "Not so," said Christ; "act and you shall know."

This is no arbitrary or unfamiliar law. The best of all our knowledge, that of it which is most useful is gained through practice. The teaching of Christ will not vindicate itself as of God merely through our studying it. No man ever learned to paint or play by mastering the theories of painting and music. He must handle the brush and finger the keys himself. As has been said, "Doing is a mode of study." Practice vindicates theory. Christ thus invited the fairest, simplest, and only possible decisive test of his teaching when he said, "If any man will do he shall know." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

The true order of Christian knowledge, then, is, first, willing; second, doing; third, knowing. This seems a reversal of the natural order, but it is not. A man says, "Must not I know a doctrine before I can begin to practice it?" We answer no. Theory does not precede practice, but practice precedes theory. Children do not study grammar first and then learn to talk. Men do not analyze soils first and then practice agriculture. Infants do not first make sure of the mechanical principles involved in walking and then learn to walk.

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The first step is willing. There can be no doing without willing to do. But the willing that discovers spiritual truth means more than that ; it means willingness also. Pascal truly says, "The perception of truth is a moral act." Fichte says : "If the will is steadfastly fixed on what is good, the understanding will of itself discover what is true." The moral disposition is everything. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Renunciation of self and surrender to God must precede all right doing and real knowing. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

The second step is doing. A French infidel once said to Pascal, "If I had your principles I should be a better man." "Begin with being a better man, and you will soon have my principles," was the reply. Our opinions depend much more on our lives than our lives on our opinions. If any man will do God's will he will soon know what is truth and what is error.

The third step is knowing. In matters practical you know only as far as you can do. Read a work on Evidences, and it may become to you highly probable that Christianity is true. That is an opinion. But do, and you will know. "With the heart man believeth." You know when you feel. In every department of knowledge there is an organ for the discovery of its specific truth. It is one thing to know chemistry ; but it is quite

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another thing to know God. Speculative truth is addressed to the intellect, æsthetic truth to the sense of the beautiful, moral truth to the moral nature, spiritual truth to the spiritual nature. "If any man willeth to do God's will he shall" not be inclined to believe that Christianity is true, that the Bible is believable ; but he shall know. "The pure in heart shall see God," and shall see many of the things of God that others cannot see. A good life is the best way to understand religion. Holy living is the key to divine truth.

" A heart of mildness, full of good intent,
Far sooner than acuteness will the truth behold."

Here is the explanation of much of the skepticism of which we hear. Faith fails when life withdraws its supports. When life is lowered the creed is also likely to be lowered to the standard of the life. Faith will leak out of a man who is living wrong, just as water will leak from a tub that has been long standing in the sun. The true order is that immorality makes skeptics, not skeptics immorality. Men change their views of the Sabbath when they begin to violate the sanctity of the Sabbath. So it is regarding doctrines—the existence of God, the enormity of sin, the certainty of judgment,—faith disappears through the seams repeated transgressions have made in the moral nature.

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What are some of the underlying reasons why Christian knowledge comes in this way? One is because a large part of moral and religious truth is practical, and cannot be known except through experience; that is, through living it. You can believe in New York or San Francisco, that there are such places, without having seen them, by a mere exercise of intellect. So can you demonstrate that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. There is no need or place for experience here. But, on the other hand, take the doctrines involved in such sentences as these: "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest;" "Ask, and ye shall receive," and how can anyone know whether they are true or not, except by the test of experience? A man says: "If I believed what Christians do, I would commence the Christian life." The thing to do is to commence the Christian life as a means to believing.

Another reason why Christian knowledge comes in this way is because spiritual things are spiritually discerned. Scientific things are scientifically discerned. Moral things are morally discerned. Newton was living in the atmosphere of science, and that is the reason he saw the apple fall. The man who lives near the gate of heaven will hear many things others do not hear, and will understand many mysteries others cannot fathom.

Another reason is because practical piety removes the pressure of intellectual difficulties by

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sustaining in the mind a cheerful trust that God is good and does all things well. A loving, trustful heart can afford to wait patiently for God's explanations.

Another reason is because piety clears away from the mind those feelings and prejudices which prevent the intellect from understanding spiritual things.

An all-important reason is because the possession of true religion gives the soul a ruling sentiment kindred to the primary impulse of God. There is a shorter way of knowing men than by studying them. When the ruling sentiment of your life and that of another life is the same, you will have an instinctive knowledge of that life, and of the sources and reasons for its conduct. Piety gives us a fellow-feeling, an identity of sentiment with the Infinite ; and hence the secrets of the Lord are with them that fear him. Love knows love ; love interprets love ; love alone can receive the revelations of love. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."

VIII

The Lost Art of Meditation

The Lost Art of Meditation

"I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings."—Ps. 77 : 12.

Some one has said that spiritual meditation is a lost art. There was undoubtedly more of it in past generations. The lack of it is, indeed, one of the religious lacks of our times. The main reason for the lack is apparent to all who give any thought to the subject. It is because of the tremendous rush and hurry of our modern life. We are "jostled out of our spirituality." There is a beautiful hymn we sometimes sing : "Take time to be holy." It does take time to be holy. We need to take time for meditation and prayer and fellowship with God if we would make any attainment in grace or growth in spiritual insight and character.

Few of us realize how great is the importance assigned to meditation in the Scriptures. It is distinctly commanded of God. Joshua was exhorted to meditate on the book of the law day and night. Timothy was counseled : "Meditate upon these things ; give thyself wholly to them." The Philippians were told "to think on these

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things." In the description of the good man, in the first Psalm, it is said that he meditated on the law of the Lord. We may notice also the resolutions of good men recorded in the Psalms: "I will meditate on Thee in the night watches" (63 : 6); "I will meditate in thy precepts" (119 : 15); "My meditation of him shall be sweet" (104 : 34). God criticised his people when they failed in this moral thoughtfulness, saying, "My people do not consider."

It is the proper occupation of the mind. The power of thinking distinguishes us from the whole material universe, and spiritual things are certainly of such transcendent importance as to be worthy of our closest attention. Besides, our character in the sight of God depends on the character of our thoughts. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23 : 7.) Men are good according to their thoughts; they are also bad according to their thoughts. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders," etc.

Meditation is essential also to the success of God's word in our souls. Christ tells us, in the parable of the sower, that it is only those "who having heard the word, keep it," that bring forth good fruit. By meditation the seed of the truth sinks into deep earth, and is "kept" and becomes fruit-bearing. It was when the prodigal "came to himself," when he really began to think, that he resolved to return to his father. It was when Peter

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“thought thereon” that he “wept.” Truth can affect us only as we think thereon.

What are some good subjects for meditation? One is God’s existence and attributes. It is one of the Bible designations of sinners that “none saith, Where is thy God, thy Maker?” It is the mark of the believer that he thinks about God, and dwells in fervent and loving meditation upon his attributes of being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

Another is God’s works. “I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings,” said the psalmist. No one can “consider the heavens,” the “moon and the stars, which he has ordained,” “remember the works of his hands,” “consider the lilies, how they grow,” or study God’s greatest work in the redemption of man, and not be immediately benefited and blessed by such meditation.

Still another is God’s words. If anything would seem to be worthy our special attention and thoughtful consideration it is God’s direct utterances by his words. His revelations, his exhortations, his commands, his promises, how infinitely important they are, and how worthy of our closest thought, our most profound attention! Such meditation would be sure to lead us also to think about God’s claims. These are worthy our special consideration on account of their comprehensiveness, their spirituality, their perpetual obligation, and our guilt if we neglect them.

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One other theme—our future. That we are to have an unending future is a great reality. It would be well for us all if we lost sight of it less, and meditated more frankly and more frequently upon it. God makes this duty plain when he says, "Oh, that they would consider their latter end!"

There are some aids to meditation. The lost art can be regained. This power of getting into the middle of things, of taking spiritual truth and musing upon it, thinking upon it, studying it deeply, is an art which can be cultivated, a religious attainment possible to us all.

A first aid toward spiritual meditation is to become deeply impressed with its value. Meditation leads to conversation. It would be easier for us to "talk of his doings" if we thought more about them. It leads to knowledge. Thinking always does. It leads to happiness. We all would be happier if we thought more about God, what he is, what he does, what he says, and thus come to know him better.

Another aid is for us to bear in mind the influence of habit and act accordingly. We will not get time for meditation, but will be sure to neglect it, unless we make set times for it and let it become a habit of our daily living. We must provide for a "quiet hour" each morning or evening, a "still hour" with God each day, just as we do for a morning and evening prayer; then, by and by, it will become a fixed habit, and both the art and the time for practicing it will be gained.

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“ Take time to be holy,
 Speak oft with thy Lord ;
Abide in him always,
 And feed on his word ;
Make friends of God’s children,
 Help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing
 His blessing to seek.

“ Take time to be holy,
 The world rushes on ;
Spend much time in secret
 With Jesus alone ;
By looking to Jesus,
 Like him thou shalt be ;
Thy friends in thy conduct
 His likeness shall see.

“ Take time to be holy,
 Let him be thy Guide,
And run not before him,
 Whatever betide ;
In joy or in sorrow
 Still follow thy Lord,
And, looking to Jesus,
 Still trust in his word.

“ Take time to be holy,
 Be calm in thy soul,
Each thought and each motive
 Beneath his control ;
Thus led by his Spirit
 To fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted
 For service above.”

IX

The Wrestle of Self With Self

The Wrestle of Self With Self

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other : so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”—Gal. 5 : 17.

The Christian life is one long conflict between opposing forces, designated respectively the flesh and the Spirit, or between the old nature and the principles implanted within us by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit ;” that is, the inclinations and desires of the flesh are contrary to those of the Spirit. They draw us in opposite directions, and this is what produces in our souls the painful controversy of which we are so conscious. “These are contrary the one to the other.” They are opposite in nature. They never can harmonize. Paul makes very plain how contrary the one is to the other by giving a list of some of the effects produced by each, these effects differing very widely. They are as opposite as adultery, wrath, strife, murders, drunkenness, are to love, joy, goodness, gentleness, and temperance. “So that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” This statement is a little stronger than the original

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words warrant. There is no declaration of the possibility or the impossibility, the ability or the inability of man to do right or wrong. There is a simple affirmation of a fact, that where these opposite principles exist a man does not do the things which otherwise he would do. The teaching is that in the mind of a renewed man there is contrariety in the two influences which bear on his soul, the Spirit of God inclining him in one direction and the lusts of the flesh in another, and that one or the other of these influences becomes so great as, in fact, to largely restrain and control the mind and the life.

It is no wonder, then, that the Christian finds himself waging a constant warfare. It is a conflict for the soul on the battlefield of life. This is what the apostle Peter means when he says, "I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." It is in this conflict, indeed, as Cæsar said of the battle he once had in Africa with the children and partakers of Pompey—that, in other battles, he was wont to fight for glory, but then and there he was obliged to fight for his life. This is a conflict in which not only our life, but our very soul is at stake. As some one has said, "All growing Christians are like men working under difficulties; like racers who must carry weights; like men rowing against wind and tide, yet compelled for dear life to row." Indeed, the Christian's life

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must be a battle from the very nature of the case. Flesh and Spirit are as contrary as water and oil, as light and darkness, as good and evil ; and so, to do the things they would and ought to do, Christians have to fight.

We might name a number of reasons why this is true. One is on account of the original sin which is a part of our nature. There can be no doubt that there is an evil principle within dishonoring our best service. Another arises from evil habits. Sin once committed retains power over our souls. It has given a taint to our thoughts and words and works, and though with many efforts we would wash it out from us, yet this is only gradually possible. Then, too, there are sins arising from lack of self-command. The governing principle within us is weak, and we find it difficult to do the things that we would wish. Then, too, there are sins which we fall into from being taken unawares. There are sins which arise from Satan's temptations, inflaming wounds and scars or past wounds healed, or nearly so. There are sins which arise from a deficiency of practical experience or from ignorance how to perform duties which we set about. Unworthy motives, low views, mistakes in principle, false maxims, negligence, forgetfulness, heedlessness, want of seriousness, all these infirmities may be and are found in persons conscientiously desiring to do right, and yet plainly conscious of frequent failures. Mr.

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Spurgeon says: "A garrison is not free from danger while it has an enemy lodged within. You may bolt all your doors and fasten all your windows; but if the thieves have placed even a little child within doors, who can draw the bolts for them, the house is still unprotected. All the sea outside a ship cannot do it damage till the water enters within and fills the hold. Hence it is clear our greatest danger is from within. All the devils in hell and tempters on earth could do us no injury if there were no corruption in our own nature. The sparks will fly harmlessly if there is no tinder. Alas! our heart is our greatest enemy; this is the little home-born thief. Lord, save me from that evil man, myself."

We all know what it means to have this traitor within, this evil lurking in our hearts which causes the flesh to lust against the Spirit, and so often results in our doing the evil that we otherwise would not do; and so the battle rages.

But is it possible for the better nature to win? If so, how? Some one answers thus: "Why, you, the central personality, take sides with one, that there may be two against one. Throw your moral power and affections upon one side, walk in the Spirit, yield to the Spirit, hold to the Spirit, and then you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. You will then do the thing that you would under the helpful influence of this gracious Agent." First, hold fast upon God. Second, wield mightily the

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weapon of prayer. Third, strive with all your might, as if everything depended upon you. Fourth, trust in God as if all depended upon him. Look up continually with faith and seek to have strength constantly renewed within you and intense repugnance to everything evil. So doing, the flesh shall gradually yield. You will gain victory after victory; strength will be added to strength, and with divine help you will finally conquer. Just as there is a traitor within every man's soul, so there is also a principle that aspires; and just as the traitor can betray him and bring dishonor, the principle of the Spirit can exalt him and bring highest glory.

We have read of some adventurous hunters who, from a ledge of rocks, robbed an eagle's nest of a young eaglet. Brought home, he was reared among fowls, that he might perform domestic duty. As he grew, he grew apart from the children of the barn yard and sat moodily in sullen dignity. As his wings secretly became strong, they were clipped. When on a summer's day in the heaven a wild hawk screamed, every fowl in the yard ran cowering to shelter, but he, with flashing eye and discordant scream, reared himself to fly. Alas ! alas ! he could not rise. He fell sick. He would have died if he might. They let him alone. His pinions grew again. They forgot him. He forgot not. The sky was his, the great round of air without line or bound was his. And when, one

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neglectful summer day, all were dozing, from far up in the sky—so far that none could see, or see more than a floating speck—there came down a cry, so faint that no ear might hear it—none but an eagle's. Then, with sudden force, all its life beating in its breast, it sprang up. Away from the yard, its fowls, its owners, over the rick and over the barn, over the trees and over the hills, round and round in widening circles, beating with growing power of wing, the freed eagle sought its fellow, and found its liberty right under the sun! And such, of many and many a soul, sad in bondage, valiant in liberty, has been the history. The aspiring nature, the soaring nature in men and women, often has got the ascendancy, and the soul has found its liberty right under the sun—in closest relation with God, its Maker.

Let us not forget that there is large compensation, indeed that there is great value in the struggle. Christians do have to fight, but they gain immensely by fighting. All valuable discipline comes from difficulties faced and overcome. It is better to fight and win than to obtain moral mastery without fighting.

For one thing the struggle draws us very close to Christ. We become conscious that in him is our strength and that we win only as we abide in him.

Then, too, the struggle develops our strength. Strength is increased by every conflict. Every victory won fits us better to win another.

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The value of the struggle is seen also in that it enables us to appreciate more fully the bliss of heaven.

“He who hath never a conflict hath never a victor’s
palm,
And only the toilers know the sweetness of rest and
calm.”

Rest, peace, glory, victory, must all be the sweeter in heaven for the struggle on earth through which we have passed to win them.

X

A Secret to be Learned

A Secret to be Learned

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content."—Phil. 4 : 11.

Piety connected with a contented mind—a mind free from fret and worry and complaint at the allotments of Providence, a mind trustful and calm and satisfied with God's will—this is the highest possible riches, the greatest gain. But it is well for us to remember that this is not something that comes to us in a natural way. It is, indeed, a secret to be learned. This is what the apostle means when he tells us, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." He had "learned" it; then contentment was not a natural thing to a restless and ambitious nature like his, but it had to be attained in some way. He had "learned" it; then it is not something that necessarily accompanies conversion and comes without effort. No, when he says that he had "learned" it, he means that he had "got into the secret of it." The exact meaning is that he had been initiated into it, by some sort of an experience, somewhat like the case of one joining a secret society; for he uses the exact Greek word denoting the celebrated sacred and

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secret rites of initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries, required of Athenian citizens.

Into the mystery of Christian contentment every citizen of Christ's kingdom should desire to be initiated. It is great gain. It was death to reveal one of those Eleusinian secrets ; but this is an "open secret," into which every one may enter. Commercial secrets are sometimes kept, like the process for making Kodak films, or for manufacturing Russia iron, but this secret is free to all—how to be rich without money. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content."

Would you like to attain this wealth—the wealth of Christian contentment? If so, we think we can give a few hints that will help very much in that direction.

In the first place, be sure to make the least of your little lacks. Contentment, after all, lies very largely within ourselves, and is not from without. It is the result of an inward state of mind more than of outward environments.

" True happiness is to no place confined,
But still is found in a contented mind."

A lady walking with her husband, and seeing a carriage go by, said to him, "Look at the splendid carriage Judge H—— and his wife are driving about in ! I only wish we could be so lucky."

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Up in the carriage the Judge's wife was saying to him : " I am getting positively ashamed of this old rig. See how the people stand and look at us with contempt ! If you do not wish to drive me to despair you must buy a new turnout ! "

In each case the lack was only that of a contented mind. " To be content with what we possess," well said Cicero, " is the greatest and most secure of riches." It was a kindred thought when Socrates asked, " Who is the richest of men ? " and replied, " He who is contented with the least, for contentment is nature's riches."

It is told of the late Rev. Dr. John Hall, of New York, that he used to say that he liked to look into the windows of the stores at Christmas time to see how many things he could do without.

Would you attain the riches of content ? Learn first, then, to make the least of your little lacks. A man of really good circumstances once said : " I look at what I have not, and count myself unhappy. Others look at what I have, and count me happy." Look at what you have, and make the least of your lacks.

To attain this wealth of Christian contentment a second secret is this : Make the most of your little enjoyments. In this way will you get

" The peace that springs
From the large aggregate of little things."

" Be content with such things as ye have," says

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the apostle. That is, "Enter upon the enjoyment of your present blessings." None of us can be sure we will ever have more; therefore we must be content now if ever. Do not postpone the day. We have the principal ingredients of happiness at this moment—home, health, food, and clothing. We can have three meals each day; how much riches would a man need to have to enable him to enjoy six? Does a rich man want to wear his overcoat in summer days for fear people will think he cannot afford one? The greatest can eat no more, wear no more than we.

"Having food and raiment let us therewith be content." Let us enjoy the common, everyday blessings we already have. We should not expect and do not need to live on nightingales' tongues or feed our horses gilded oats from a marble manger. Besides, if we had more it might not bring us happiness. "Ah, if the rich were as rich as the poor fancy riches!" exclaims Emerson. It is a well-known fact that men do not feel happy in proportion to the amount of their possessions.

A reporter once asked Mr. Blaine what he considered the happiest period of his life. He said it was before the people became interested in him; before he was watched, and followed, and persecuted—when he was a plain young lawyer happy over a five-dollar case.

There is a royal way in which we all can in-

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crease our happiness if we will. It is by limiting our desires. "Contentment," quaintly says Thomas Fuller, "consisteth not in adding more fuel, but in taking away some fire; not in multiplying of wealth, but in subtracting men's desires." In a public park in Manchester, England, is a statue to the memory of Joseph Brotherton, who represented that city in Parliament for many years. On it is this inscription, "My wealth consisted not in the abundance of my riches but in the fewness of my wants."

Let us learn to make the most of the enjoyments we have, and not worry about those we have not. We have friends, and home, and health, and hope—let us enjoy them. We can, indeed, so educate our will power that it will focus our thoughts on the bright side of things, will lead us to see the good we have, until we shall attain such a spirit of happiness as will make us rich. The habit of making the best of things, of always looking on the bright side of things, is a fortune in itself. To make the least of our little lacks and to make the most of our present enjoyments will go far toward giving us the riches of contentment.

A third secret is this: Do the best with your little duties. They contain the principle of true service; they are the make-up of most of our lives; and by them we shall be judged at the last. We will not be judged by the great things

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we intended to do. Just to do cheerfully, faithfully, obediently, the little everyday duties that come to us, not waiting for something great or high, will go far toward making for us each a happy, rich, and contented life.

Make the least of your little lacks ; make the most of your present enjoyments ; do the best with your little duties, and then, lastly, "Trust in God and do the right." These, we believe, are the open secrets of a happy life. The supreme source of comfort will ever come from confidence in God and devotion to his service. It is the blessed privilege of every child of God to enjoy a peace of mind quite unknown to those who do not love and follow him. The Christian knows whom he has believed, and is persuaded that he is able to keep that which he has committed to him against that day ; and because of this there comes into his soul a peace, a sweet and precious peace, which the world with all its wealth cannot give, and which, with all its vicissitudes, it cannot take away. It is a happy fact that while we all cannot be money-rich, we all can be rich without money by becoming millionaires of mind and of heart, of character and of faith, possessing that godliness which with contentment is great gain—the real gain—the greatest of gain. May each of our readers be so supremely happy as to learn Paul's secret and come into this rich possession !

XI

Yielding Ourselves to God

Yielding Ourselves to God

“Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.”—Rom. 6 : 13.

It is said that once Mendelssohn went to see the great Freiburg organ. The old custodian refused him permission to play upon the instrument, not knowing who he was. At length, however, he reluctantly granted him leave to play a few notes. Mendelssohn took his seat, and soon the most wonderful music was breaking forth from the organ. The custodian was spellbound. He came up beside the great musician and asked his name. Learning it, he stood humiliated and self-condemned, saying, “I refused you permission to play upon my organ !” There comes One to us who desires to take our lives and play upon them. But we withhold ourselves from him, and refuse him permission, when if we would yield ourselves to him, he would bring from our souls the most heavenly music. And this yielding is the first duty of every individual man, woman, and child. God has a right to be thus honored by us. “Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.” It is implied that God as our Maker,

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Preserver, and Saviour, has a right to be thus honored. In yielding ourselves we include all we have and are,—our faculties, our time, our substance, our talents, our thoughts, our words, our deeds. “In support of a good cause,” said one, “I give myself.” That was the greatest possible gift. There are many possible gifts which do not include the whole, but when I give myself I give all. Our self, our all, is due to God.

It should be an absolute and full surrender. In yielding ourselves to God we must not qualify the agreement. No stipulations as to degree, time, or place must be made, and no reservations. The English landlord lets out his farm reserving certain game rights to himself. Our covenant with God must not be like that. It must be more like the true marriage covenant, for better and for worse, for time and for eternity.

Our yielding to God must also be a voluntary act. Of course, not in the sense of being independent of Divine grace. For we love him because he first loved us. But it must be voluntary so far as our wills are concerned,—so far as the willingness of it is concerned.

We are told that having offended the Romans, whose power was incomparably superior to their own, the Tusculi were threatened with vengeance by the marching of Camillus at the head of a considerable army toward their city. Conscious of their inability to cope with such an adversary,

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they adopted the following plan for appeasing him. They declined to make resistance, set open their gates, and applied themselves to their proper business, resolving to submit, since they found it impossible to contend. Camillus on entering their city was struck with their prudence, and spake as follows: "You of all people have found out the true method of abating the Roman fury; and your submission has proved your best defense. Upon these terms we can no more find it in our hearts to injure you, than upon other considerations you could have found power to oppose us."

Thus is submission our best defense. The chief inducement for a sinner to submit to God, is the knowledge that God is not inexorable, but that there is full and free forgiveness with him, through Jesus Christ.

The unyielding life is the citadel of Self. God will not force it. But when its key, the will, is voluntarily handed over to him, then he floods the life with fullness of blessing. Would you know his, "I will bless thee"? Then absolutely, unreservedly, confidently yield yourself, your life, your all, over into his hands, for time and for eternity.

It will not do in lieu of this to give money, or time, or service only. Thousands are trying thus to silence conscience and rob God. We must needs give ourselves. How grieved would that

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true lover be whose betrothed would answer his petitions for her heart, herself, by proffering her purse, or houses, or lands! How much more must God be grieved by our attempts to satisfy him by giving him anything else except the one thing he wants—ourselves. “My son, give me thine heart.” There is a giving which is instead of ourselves; and there is a giving of ourselves. One is a poor bribe of legalism to Love. The other is a proper, joyful response of love to Love.

What are some of the results of thus yielding to God? Having yielded ourselves to God and received his blessings of pardon, peace, and power, the first result will be loyalty—loyalty to him. This means that in spite of all adversities and reverses we will follow him through good report and through evil report unto prison or even unto death.

Some soldiers have voluntarily linked themselves to the destiny and fortunes of their commanders, going with them into banishment, sharing their disgrace and submitting to their humiliations. So should we show our loyalty to Christ, like Ruth's loyalty to Naomi, not for fame, nor gain, nor ease, nor pleasure, but because we can say, “Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

Having yielded ourselves to God and received his blessing, another important result will be service—practical service for him. “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey,

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his servants ye are to whom ye obey?" If raised from the dead it is to be a resurrection unto life. We are not to sit idly on the grave's side, but to yield our members actively, and with all possible energy as instruments of righteousness unto God.

XII

The Secret of a Strong Heart

The Secret of a Strong Heart

“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”—Ps. 27 : 14.

This psalm is a song of cheerful hope. This hopeful attitude was maintained by the psalmist in the face of the fact that he was in most distressing circumstances. From the psalm itself we gather the inferences that he was pursued by enemies (v. 2) ; shut away from God's house (v. 4) ; parted from father and mother (v. 10), and subject to the opposition of slander (v. 12). The circumstances seem to point to the time when Doeg, the Edomite, spoke against him to Saul.

It is also a psalm of personal experience. It bears testimony to the personal blessings received, and convictions that came to his mind growing out of them. It is as though he had said : “I have found the Lord to be my light and my salvation ; whom then shall I fear ? He has proved to be the strength of my life ; of whom then shall I be afraid ? When mine enemies—wicked, many, full of cruel hate—made onslaught to destroy me, they stumbled and fell. I have decided that

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though an host should encamp against me I will not allow my heart to fail me or become fluttered by fear; yes, even though it may come to actual war against me, I will still be confident. In the time of trouble I know that he will defend me. He will hide me in his pavilion. He will give me the best shelter in the worst danger. A royal pavilion is erected in the center of the army, and round it all the mighty men keep guard at all hours; so will he hide me in this very safest place, beside himself, my King. Or my safety will be as one in the secret of his tabernacle; not as at the horns of the altar, or even in the holy place, so sacred, but as it were in the very holy of holies—the inner chamber of divine presence and protection. If not thus hidden, then he will set me up upon a rock, in some strong tower of impregnable situation and defense. I had fainted had I not had this faith and felt assured thus of the goodness and love of God. But I have tested his grace and his help; my faith has grown out of experience, and now I want to commend to others the God who has been so good to me, and my call is to all, ‘Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.’ ”

The center of that promise is in the assurance of having the heart strengthened. This is what we so much need and so much desire—strength of heart.

Strength of heart is a matter of very great im-

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portance. It is the secret of confidence. We will make no effort in a direction in which we have no confidence or expectation of attainment. It is the secret of courage. We can scarcely "be of good courage" without possessing first some measure of confidence of success. It is the secret of action. A strong heart makes a strong arm. It is the secret of victory. Confidence, courage, and action bring victory. So all success depends upon possessing a strong heart.

What is the secret of a strong heart? A strong heart is usually found through some of the various ways of "waiting on the Lord." For example, in spiritual meditation. While we muse, the fire burns. Many Christians are weak of heart and of purpose in these days because they live in such a hurry, and do not take time to "wait on the Lord" in the way of spiritual thoughtfulness and meditation. We need more "quiet hours," when we may receive grace and strength from God. Many of the mighty men of faith and Christian usefulness of the past—men like Richard Baxter, John Bunyan and others—were men of much spiritual meditation.

It is found in prayer. It is in the act of prayer that we grow strong of heart and fitted for success in God's cause. It was as he wrestled with God that Jacob, the supplanter, was changed to Israel, the prince of God. with princely power with God and men.

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It is found in Bible study. The heart grows strong as we read and meditate upon God's precious promises, note his assurances of help, study his character and take into our souls his truth.

It is found in the use of other means of grace—attendance at the house of prayer, union with fellow-believers in the privileges of the sanctuary, and actual enlistment in Christian service. These are all ways in which the heart grows strong.

Are you lacking in the spirit of good cheer and hopefulness? Get closer to God, and your heart will grow strong. Do you find yourself lacking in Christian courage? Get near enough to grasp his all-conquering hand, and you will be able to "do exploits" in his name. Are you conscious of a sad lack of power as a worker? As the trolley pole is held up close against the wire, and power comes down to move the car, so hold yourself in intimate contact with God; wait upon him, keep near enough to him for his grace to flow into your soul, and you will be strong for his service and have power to perform wonders. A strong heart is necessary to success, and the secret of getting that strong heart is contact with God.

XIII

The Comfort of the Truth

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The Comfort of the Truth

"He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth."—John 14 : 16, 17.

"That we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."—Rom. 15 : 4.

One's first impression on hearing this expression, "The comfort of the scriptures," is likely to be in the direction of a doubt as to whether the Scriptures really are comforting, after all. We all know how disturbing and uncomfortable a thing God's word can be at times. We have felt its alarming and reproofing and convicting power so often that we come to think of the production of such effects as being largely the mission of the Bible. But in that ever precious and comforting fourteenth chapter of John, it is made perfectly plain that the very means the Holy Ghost uses in his mission of comfort is the truth. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is expressly called "the Spirit of truth." We are liable to think also of the Scriptures as having almost exclusively a mission to tell us the inevitable results of sin, to reprove and to exhort, to awaken and to restrain us, forgetting

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such plain statements as we find in the Epistle to the Romans, that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." The "comfort of the scriptures" is a most important part of their mission to men.

For real comfort truth is preëminent. There is nothing else like it or that can compare with it in comforting power. It is the mission of the Holy Spirit to bring truth in contact with our minds, and it is by this means he proves to be "the Comforter." What multitudes have sought God's word in time of trouble! and they have found it always full of comfort and consolation. All that help, encouragement and comfort were the direct result of truth brought to bear on mind and soul. This shows the folly of our ever seeking refuge in ignorance. Ostrich-like, hiding our eyes from the truth never can give us real comfort. It shows the folly also of our ever resting on half truths. Half truths are whole lies; and nothing can be more discomfoting and disappointing than taking refuge on the yielding soil of deceptive appearance—truth that is only part truth—enough to make it dangerous. Christ knew the truth, the whole truth, and yet was comforted. Indeed it was because he knew the truth in its fullness that he was so calm and cheerful at all times. He knew the truth; he knew the

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power of truth; he knew the fruition of truth, and so fully that this very knowledge was the cause of his calm. If we knew the truth we would be comforted. The more truth we know the more filled with comfort we shall be. Therefore we see the importance of our continually seeking the truth. "Buy the truth, and sell it not."

We all ought to estimate more highly than we do the comfort-bearing power of truth as we have it in God's word. Afflicted disciples who have obtained this secret have continually fed upon such passages of God's word as the twenty-third Psalm, John, fourteen and fifteen, Romans, eighth chapter, and the epistles of Peter and John, and hundreds of other such portions in the Bible laden with the comfort-bearing messages of the truth. The Bible teaches us that God is love. What a source of comfort it is to know that one truth—that God loves us. The Bible teaches us that God is wisdom. All his ways of dealing with us are wise, and his wisdom is guided by love. How well we can afford to trust him! How much comfort there is in knowing the truth that God is both loving and wise! The Bible teaches us, furthermore, that God is infinitely strong. Some might be loving, and not know how to help us when in trouble. Some might be both loving and wise, yet lacking entirely in power to aid us. But not so with God. He is loving, and so dis-

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posed to help us. He is wise, and knows what is best to do for us. He also is strong, and able to deliver us or make all things work together for our good. It is such truths as these the Bible gives us. No wonder Christians find in them comforting power. The more truth we know the more comforted we shall be.

Let us estimate as we ought the comfort-bearing mission of the Holy Ghost and encourage his presence and indwelling within us. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. He leads into the truth. He teaches us how to reject things that are false, how to detect the destroying error in half truths, and urges us to grow upward out of ignorance. He is the Spirit of truth ; and it is by bringing truth into contact with our souls that he proves himself preëminently our Comforter.

Do we want to be a blessing to the world? Then let us make our business that of spreading the truth. We become comforters in proportion as we spread abroad the truth.

Would we be impelled to greater earnestness in Christian work? Then let us think of the great need there is throughout the world for this comfort. How much of error there is ! How many there are who sit in the darkness of ignorance or surrounded by the mists of half truths ! How many suffering and sorrowing souls there are who might be comforted if only God's truth could be

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brought to bear upon their minds and hearts !
Let us become deeply convinced of the comforting power of truth, and then endeavor by every means in our power to be truth-seekers truth-lovers, truth-spreaders.

XIV

Vision and Service

Vision and Service

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."—Prov. 29 : 18.

"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."—Acts 26 : 19.

There can be no service without vision, and no real vision without service. The incentive for doing comes from seeing. No time in life is quite so valuable as that in which vision comes. The "practical" is not to be despised. It is necessary. But it is not all. We smile sometimes at young people's aspirations, and call them air castles. Perhaps they are, but they are not to be scoffed at. For out of them come ideals and dreams which lead human nature upwards toward heights whereon may be built grand and lofty life structures. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." The need that we should turn our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help, grows more and more apparent. When God would have Moses build a tabernacle in the wilderness, that the people might worship aright, he took him into the mountain and showed him the pattern of it. Afterwards he charged him to see

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that he made it in all respects "after the pattern which was showed him in the mount." Our lives are to be patterned after the visions we see.

Saul had a vision. From that day he became Paul, and his was a changed and most successful life. Having met the Saviour, having heard his message, having seen the great possibilities of good open before him, his soul was awakened to high things, and he began a course of obedience to a heavenly vision which led him on and on. That was the secret of his success in the mightiest work for Christ and the world that probably ever has been accomplished by man—except that accomplished by the Divine Man, our Saviour. We might even say that it was this fact of following a vision which inspired Christ himself; for we are told that it was "for the joy that was set before him" he "endured the cross, despising the shame." He too was following a vision. It was of a redeemed world.

One reason why vision is so important is because vision is the source of faith. Believing is at the bottom of all advancement. It is so in material things. All art and architecture, all invention is the result of believing, of faith. Each creation of men's hands, some one saw while it was invisible. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." Yonder is Cologne cathedral. Originally it was like some building up in the air, high above the earth. Some one believed in it

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before it was seen. Others came to believe in it, by following some man of faith. Some doubted; others opposed, for there are always such, but some believed as seeing it when it was yet invisible. Money was gathered, sacrifices were made, and all these things were like unseen bands thrown over the cathedral pulling it down to the earth. By and by, it touched the ground, and now it stands erect, beautiful, secure, for all to come and worship in.

The same thing is true of the city in which you live and the streets in which you walk and of all the institutions whose benefits you enjoy. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." It is the men who believe in unseen things who lead the world upward.

Another reason why vision is so important is because vision, with the faith which grows out of it, gives purpose. Purpose is the out-reach of life, just as faith is its up-reach. This is why a purposeless life is predoomed to failure. It does not go for anything. It has no aim. It is a ship masterless and rudderless. Even in nature nothing is purposeless. It is of the essence of its success that nature goes in straight lines,—has a definite purpose always. Each plant, each shrub, each tree could say, "This one thing I do." It puts its whole strength into bringing about a certain result. And if beset by enemies, attacked by a worm, or by drought, it only redoubles its effort

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to bring about the desired result. We have seen wheat in the San Joaquin Valley, California, suddenly head up and bring grains to perfection when the dry season set in.

Plan victories. Plan them always. Never plan anything else but victories. Encourage vision and faith and the promptings of purpose. Don't drift. Don't do the easy thing. Don't let yourself go with circumstances. Many a life goes to wreck and ruin because, like a ship without a pilot, no guiding purpose directs its course.

Yet another reason why vision is so important is because of the fact that vision, with the faith and purpose growing out of it, results in self-sacrifice and enthusiasm and in the bringing of things to pass. As has been said, the incentive comes from seeing. Interviews with God on the mount equip us for service in the valley.

Some may wonder why it is that following a vision has so much to do with success in life. One reason is because it gives such definiteness to aim. There is something to go for. Another reason is that the inspiration of a vision gives persistence, pluck, and tenacity. The man who follows a vision knows not how to beat a retreat. He presses toward a mark. And he arrives there, by and by. Still another fact is this, that the sight of his vision creates in the man who follows it an almost unquenchable enthusiasm. And what are hardships, ridicule, persecution, toil, sickness,

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difficulties, to a soul just throbbing with an overmastering enthusiasm? "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." We know perfectly well what Paul's vision was. It was a sight of Christ. It was a glimpse of his glory. It was a conception of his character. It was a call to his service. It was a commission to open blind eyes, to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." Paul began at once to follow his vision; and he continued to follow it to the end of his days. And we know where it led him. He is by common consent called the Great Apostle; for he "labored more abundantly than they all," and his life was crowned with abundant success.

That is what following a vision will do for every one of us. And we all have our visions. This privilege is not one that came to Paul alone, or to Moses alone. Our visions are given to draw us upward to a higher life. They are glimpses of the heavenly life, granted to show us what we ought to be. They are intimations, too, of the possibilities of attainment that lie within us.

XV

Growth

Growth

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." II Pet. 3 : 18.

Religion is often represented in the Bible as grace, since every part of it is the result of grace, of God's unmerited favor. To "grow in grace" is to increase in all that constitutes true religion. Let us not forget that religion is just as susceptible of cultivation and growth as any other virtue of the soul or of character. Religion is likely to be very feeble in its beginnings, like the sprouting germ of a plant. It increases as it is cultivated. There is almost no piety in the world, which is not the result of cultivation, which cannot be measured largely by the degree of care and attention bestowed upon it. No one becomes eminently good, any more than anyone becomes eminently learned or rich or great, who does not intend it, purpose it, work at it. Ordinarily, men in religion are what they intend to be, what they design to be. They have about as much religion as they wish. They possess about the sort of character they propose to possess. This being so, we see the importance of the Bible exhortations to

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growth in grace. They are intended to arouse our wills, strengthen our good purposes, and set us forward in the Christian life.

Growth in grace may and should manifest itself in a great variety of directions. Through it every good quality of the soul should be increased. Grace should show in us, as the years make their mark on trees, by hidden inner circles of growth, adding continually layers of largeness representing added measures of strength and beauty and usefulness.

From the many directions in which growth in grace may manifest itself let us consider a few. The first is growth downward. We ought to know ourselves better. By the duty of growth downward we mean the duty of growth in the direction of knowing our own hearts, in the direction of coming to a knowledge of our real selves, our depravity, our unbelief, our tendency away from spiritual things. Too much introspection results in evil ; but in these days there is too little self-examination and self-knowledge among Christians. We live so fast that we do not take time to look within or drag our sins into the light. No wonder there is so much spiritual pride, so little real Christian humility in the world. A man once bought a barometer under a mistaken idea of its purpose, and then complained that he could not see that it had made any improvement in the weather. It was not intended to improve the

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weather, but to show what the weather happened or was most likely to be. There is use for the spiritual barometer of self-examination. It helps the Christian to obey the old Delphic oracle, "Know thyself." We need to go deeper than that oracle meant and know ourselves spiritually. Saint Bernard, one of the holiest of men, was in the habit of constantly warning himself by the solemn query, "Bernard, for what purpose art thou here?" Surely self-examination could assume no more searching form. It is reported of Sextus, that every night before he slept he asked of his own heart, "What evil hast thou this day amended? What vice hast thou shunned? What good hast thou done? In what part art thou better?" Such review is always profitable. Be thoughtful. Be humble. Grow downward.

Another desirable direction for growth in grace to take is growth inward. By this we mean growth in vital experience, in love to God, in simplicity of faith. It is possible for us all to have a religion much more vital than we have if we would only pay more attention to this duty of growth inward. Do we think about God as much as we ought? Do we pray? Do we pray in the real spirit of prayer? Do we cultivate acquaintance with God through listening to his words to us? Do we love his law and make it our meditation day and night? Do we long for fellowship with God? Do we practice his presence every

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day and hour? The happiest days you ever have known were the days when you were living nearest to Christ and were most conscious of his nearness to you. Think what a source of joy it would become if we could get into a sustained and stable Christian experience like the best we have known, walking with God all the day and every day, dwelling "in the secret of his presence." Is there not reason, much reason for us all, to desire more of this growth inward?

A further desirable direction for this growth in grace to take is growth upward. We may think of this as the attaining of victory over the world, and the coming to have more of the aspiring spirit which leads to prayer and longings Godward. Most of us live too near the ground. Our branches do not reach upward into the light and the sunshine of God's love. "The Lord God is a sun." Plants and vegetation and trees grow toward the sun. If any are in the shade they struggle toward the sun, the source of their life and light. It is in this same direction that Christians ought to grow toward God, the source of their life and light and blessedness. Grow toward God. Grow upward.

Still another desirable direction for growth in grace to manifest itself is in growth outward. Good works are the proper indications of vital principles within. Every growing Christian should bear in increasing abundance the fruits of holiness.

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There are many conditions of fruit-bearing. One is, to be rooted and grounded in Christ. Another, worthy of more attention than it gets, is to be rooted and grounded in his Church. There is said to be a very odd tree in an orchard near Milwaukee. It is an old apple tree that was planted twenty-eight years ago, with its limbs in the ground and its roots in the air. It still lives to bear an occasional apple and to sprout branches where roots should be, and roots where twigs and leaves should be ; but it is really of no use, except as a curiosity to beholders. The farmer was induced to make the trial through an old German legend, in which such an inverted tree played a prominent part. But although it still lives, and bears now and then an apple, it is only a curiosity and bears no fruit of any account. So we say the people who try to live Christian lives without being planted in the Christian Church, and letting their roots run down into the responsibilities of church life, are very much like that inverted tree. The Christians who really bear fruit are those who are rooted deep and solid in the garden of the Lord. Grow in grace. Grow in all the directions we have mentioned ; but do not forget this important condition of growth, or help toward growth, coming from the diligent use of the means of grace God has provided through his Church.

XVI

Being Comforted

Being Comforted

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith our God."
Isa. 40 : 1.

What a sweet title, "My people"! What a cheering revelation, "Your God"! What a comfort there is in the thought that we are his people and that God is our God! How general, too, is the need of comfort! Each heart knoweth its own sorrow. All have trials and afflictions and therefore all need comfort.

How much comfort there is in the thought of God's love! God's people cannot always understand his dealings with them, but this we know, that they are all love-prompted and love-wrought; for "God is love." His love is strong like a father's: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." His love is very tender, like a mother's: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." God's love goes out toward us continually; but just as a father or a mother shows special tenderness and heed to a sick or suffering child, so does God deal with us when we are in trouble. What blessed results would come if everywhere,

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the world over, we could get people to realize this one supreme, glad fact that God is love ! How it would soften the hearts of all the sinning, cause all to yield who are resisting, and how it would bring cheer to the lonely, comfort to the sorrowing, strength to the weak, and fill us all with joy and peace in believing ! Besides, this love of God is absolutely unvarying, so that we can rely upon it under all possible circumstances. It is related that a certain man placed on one of his buildings a weather-vane, upon which were inscribed the words, " God is love." Some one criticised him, saying, " You have placed an immutable truth on a very change-ful thing." " No ; it is all right," he replied, " it means that God is love, whichever way the wind blows." Yes, it is a glad fact that his is a love that can be depended upon, and meets us in every condition and circumstance of life.

Growing out of this love comes also God's sympathy. The human heart craves sympathy. In time of trouble how grateful it is to us to have friends who come and sympathize with us. But let us be sure of this, that God sympathizes with us in our every distress. When we are sick we send for a physician ; but we find difficulty in making real to him the mere fact of our pain. But our Divine Physician so fully enters with us into our troubles that he is " touched with the feeling of our infirmities." " In all their afflictions he was afflicted." He feels deeply for us and with us.

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As Jesus wept with Mary and Martha so he weeps with us, enters with us into our troubles and is full of the most tender sympathy. If we prize the sympathy of earthly friends, how much more should we prize God's sympathy !

Add to thoughts of God's sympathy and love another, that of his infinite wisdom, and how much added comfort we get ! His dealings are not only love-prompted, but his love is guided by unerring wisdom. We are often like little children, in our ignorance crying for what would harm us. God is like an all-loving and wise parent who withholds the thing that would destroy. A sea-captain allayed the fears of his ten-year-old daughter, on her first voyage with him, by assuring her that he would be at the helm all night long. So Christ is our all-skilled Pilot, and will wisely guide. It is not for us who are passengers to meddle with helm or chart or compass. We should let our all-wise Pilot alone with his work, and trust. One so loving, so thoughtful of us, so wise ; how well we can afford to trust him !

But there is another quality in God which crowns all these we have mentioned. He is not alone loving and sympathetic and wise. One might be all these and yet not be able to deliver. A friend might be loving, sympathetic, willing to help us, wise enough to know just what ought to be done, and yet be absolutely unable, lacking in the power to help us. Not so with God. Nothing

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is too hard for him. He is infinitely strong. He can put underneath us his everlasting arms and bear us up. He is able to make all grace abound toward us. He is able to fulfill his promise to make all things work together for our good.

How wonderfully, too, does God uphold his people in time of trouble ! Multitudes of Christians, looking ahead, have seen troubles approaching that they felt they never would be able to pass through ; but, when the time came, sustaining grace was given. They were privileged both to rest their heads on God's great, beating heart of love, and to feel that underneath were the Everlasting Arms.

A minister on his deathbed was being tended by his daughter. She was very solicitous for his comfort, and spoke of placing additional pillows under him. He said " No, I have three pillows under me now. One is God's love, another is God's wisdom, and the other is God's power." These are the pillows on which every weary, troubled, or pain-tested Christian may rest and find truest comfort and sweetest consolation.

XVII

Under his Wings

Under his Wings

“He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.”—Ps. 91 : 4.

This whole psalm is one of inexpressible beauty and preciousness. Among all the psalms there is not one more cheering or with tone more elevated and sustained throughout. Here faith is at its best and speaks nobly. The theme of the psalm is the security of those who put their trust in God, and this idea is most beautifully expressed in the imagery of this portion of a verse where his people are spoken of as being “Under his wings.” “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.”

“Under his wings” there is protection and safety. It must needs be that storms and sorrows, trials and temptations, dangers and difficulties, come. They do come to us all, and too many and too much for any unaided, unprotected life, to bear up under. But shall the storms discourage or destroy us? Not at all, for “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.” It is not upon our heads that the fury of the storm falls. We are covered by the

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Divine feathers and sheltered under the Divine wings.

God's wings are very swift wings. A carrier pigeon has been known to fly over ninety miles in one hour. It has been estimated that in the ten years of a swallow's life it flies far enough to have gone round the world eighty-nine times, so great is its velocity. But these are not half so swift as is our heavenly Father to give his children aid. When a sinner seeks pardon or a baffled soul needs help, swifter than the eagle's wing are the wings of the Almighty in giving deliverance.

God's wings are also very broad wings. There have been eagles captured with wings over seven feet from tip to tip. When the king of the air sits on the crag the wings are spread over all the eaglets in the eyrie, and when he starts from the rock the shadow is like the spreading of a storm cloud. So God's wings are broad wings, covering all our wants, all our sorrows, all our sufferings, giving protection to and meeting the necessities of all his great human family.

God's wings are strong wings. The strength of a bird's wing we can guess from the fact that not a few of them can fly for days without resting. There have been condors in the Andes that could overcome an ox or a stag. There have been eagles that have picked up children and swung them to the top of the cliffs. There are birds whose wings are packed with strength to fly, to lift, to destroy.

Under his Wings

So the wings of God are strong wings, "mighty to save." What a blessed thing it is to be defended by the strong wings of the Almighty! "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust." Here is protection and safety. Oh, the blessing of knowing that "there's a refuge near" !

"Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of thy wing."

"Under his wings" there is sweet comfort also. The young birds find warmth under the mother-bird's wings. They have the bird-life comfort. To the Christian the outside world may be cold, unfriendly, unkind. "The world would love his own," and only his own. But the Christian finds, under the shelter of God's wings, not alone protection, but through Christ the warmth of love, of friendliness, of interest, and the kindness of true unselfishness.

The young birds find contentment under the mother-bird's wings. How quiet they become! They nestle down in absolute contentment. So does the Christian, trusting under the broad, strong wings of the Almighty. There is a sense of sweet content. "In the shadow of his wings there is rest, sweet rest." "In the shadow of his wings there is peace, sweet peace." Warm nest!

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Blessed nest ! Why will men stay out in the cold, to be hurt of temptation or to be chilled by the blast, when there is divine shelter ? Let us nestle down under the safe, strong, and very gentle wings of the Almighty. "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust."

"Under his wings I am safely abiding ;
Though the night deepens and tempests are wild,
Still I can trust him ; I know he will keep me ;
He has redeemed me, and I am his child.

"Under his wings, what a refuge in sorrow !
How the heart yearningly turns to his rest !
Often when earth has no balm for my healing,
There I find comfort, and there I am blest.

"Under his wings ! oh, what precious enjoyment !
There will I hide till life's trials are o'er ;
Sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me :
Resting in Jesus I'm safe evermore.

"Under his wings, under his wings,
Who from his love can sever ?
Under his wings my soul shall abide,
Safely abide for ever."

XVIII

Borrowed Religion

Borrowed Religion

“And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.”—Matt. 25 : 8.

It was want of oil that prevented the five foolish virgins of Christ's parable from being able to enter the marriage feast. At the last minute they sought to borrow, but could not. The religiously unready cannot be supplied by others. No one can borrow religion.

How closely the unprepared resembled the prepared for a time ! They were alike invited, alike had lamps, alike came as far as the door. The difference between those who are Christians and those who are not is not always easily distinguished. Outward appearance and actions do not always decide. The question lies within the heart. The gates of heaven may prove a sad test to many.

It is a noticeable fact, too, that the bridegroom came at the most difficult time for them to make up for their lack of preparation. It was at “midnight.” At that hour there was poor opportunity for buying oil. The hour when that crisis comes is a poor time to prepare for death. It is, indeed,

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the most unfavorable time. There are the medical attendants, the hurried business to be attended to, the weakness, the weeping, the farewells, with little opportunity to attend to eternal things. No hour is so utterly unfavorable in all a man's life as the closing hour.

But the parable was a message to the living, and conveys an especial and definite warning against the folly of trying to borrow religion. The foolish virgins, unprepared, tried to borrow. "Give us of your oil." Trying to borrow religion is a common resort of many. There are people who try to borrow religion from their friends. A young man says he is safe because his mother is a Christian, a husband because his wife is. Men do sometimes hold property and conduct business "in the wife's name," but they cannot have religion in that way.

Some people borrow religion from a past experience. They had some religious concern or emotion years back, and found on that their hope. But no "old experience" can take the place of a present, vital relation to Christ. A man cannot live to-day on the heart beats of last month.

Some borrow religion from ritualism. They think they are safe because they have been baptized, or go to church, or through certain religious forms; but they may, in fact, have no more real life than Barnum's moving wax-work figures. There is such a thing as wax-work Christians,

Borrowing Religion

“having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”

Some borrow religion from a false view of God's mercy. God is wondrously merciful ; but he is holy and just, too. Mercy is boundless and free at the foot of the cross ; but men who borrow religion do not seek it at the cross of Christ.

Be warned against the mistake of trying to borrow religion. It must be a vital possession of your own, sought and obtained from God.

XIX

Living on Yesterday's Grace

Living on Yesterday's Grace

"A daily rate for every day."—II Kings 25 : 30.

This beautiful and meaningful expression occurs in the account of the kindness shown by the King of Babylon to Jehoiachin. Though a captive, "he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon ; and changed his prison garments : and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life."

"A daily rate for every day"; this thought is directly applicable to God's ways of dealing with us. For one thing it rebukes in us the folly of trying to live on yesterday's grace. It is as wise to talk of gaining physical strength and support for to-day on the food we ate last week or last month as to talk of building up and strengthening the soul on the blessings and grace received in the past. If your soul would be active, alive, and strong, its divine food, like the manna from heaven given the children of Israel, must be fresh from the sky each day. The spiritual food

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given and received must be "a daily rate for every day."

Toplady has well said in speaking of living to-day's life on yesterday's grace: "The act of breathing which I performed yesterday will not keep me alive to-day; I must continue to breathe afresh every moment, or animal life will cease. In like manner yesterday's grace and spiritual strength must be renewed, and the Holy Spirit must continue to breathe on my soul from moment to moment in order to my enjoying the consolations, and to my working the works of God."

This thought of "a daily rate for every day" also reveals to us the privilege of living one day at a time. As with the old pendulum in the fable, despair comes to many a heart when life is viewed in the aggregate. But this is not the way to view life. It does not come to us all in one piece. We do not get it even in years or months, but in days, day by day, one day at a time. We have only one day's duties or trials or cares in a day, and grace is promised "a daily rate for every day;" why, then, should we not live the life of trust, of simple, humble dependence on God, without thought of worry?

This thought of "a daily rate for every day" also rebukes in us the sin of borrowing trouble. Why borrow trouble for any to-morrow when to-morrow is sure to have its measure of grace? With too many Christians it is just fret, fret, all the

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time ; not over present, but anticipated troubles—worrying over imaginary evils. As an old writer says, “It is evils that never happen that have mostly made men miserable.” But why should we worry when we have such a promise as this—“a daily rate for every day”? That means Monday's grace for Monday, Tuesday's grace for Tuesday, and so on.

Once more, this thought of “a daily rate for every day” is suited to stimulate and encourage us in all Christian effort. Some may be only beginning the Christian life. Is it not a blessed assurance with which to start out? What more could you ask? You are to have grace and strength, “a daily rate for every day.” But this is not an encouragement for beginners alone. Fellow-pilgrims, climbing the rough and rugged steepes of life, weak or strong, young or old, in sunshine or in shade, whatever your circumstances or need, take heart, take hope, take courage! “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” Whatever your burdens, whatever your duties, whatever your sufferings or your labor, this promise is yours, and yours for all time—“a daily rate for every day”—“As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

XX

Ye Have Need of Patience

Ye Have Need of Patience

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."—Heb. 10 : 36.

There is a patience which is a mere enduring, mere mute, uncomplaining submission to ill. But such is not necessarily Christian patience. In religion patience is something higher and better than that. It is, as some one has well said, "the endurance of evil, out of the love of God, as the will of God." Christian patience is not an insensibility to present evils, nor an indifference to future good. But it is a disposition which keeps us calm and composed of mind and steadily persistent in the practice of duty whether circumstances favor us or whether they do not, and all under the sense of love to God and of willingness to submit to his will as being best for us. Patience is composed, therefore, of confidence, hope, and belief in future good. It prevents our letting go and giving up. Two of its principal ingredients are obedience and humility. By humility the spirit is kept calm and submissive under ill, and by the spirit of obedience one is impelled to go

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forward in all duty in spite of every sort of opposition or difficulty.

We all have need of patience. We need it from the very nature of our constitutions. We are naturally impatient. For the most part we find our active powers in ascendancy. We can do or dare better than we can wait and endure. We need patience also in order to do our work. "Rome was not built in a day," and life cannot be lived, duty done, nor results accomplished in a day.

Patience is needed in our secular callings. The great lack of our age is a lack of thoroughness, of willingness to do our best and wait. How seldom you will find a young man or a young woman who is willing to take time to prepare for a life work! "Can't wait" is characteristic of the century and is written on everything—on commerce, on schools, on society, on churches. Can't wait for a high school, seminary or college. The boy can't wait to become a youth, nor the youth to become a man. Youths rush into business with no great reserve of education or drill, and of course they do poor, feverish work, and break down in middle life, and many die of old age in the forties. What is needed is more patience in the secular callings. Johnson said a man must study half a library to write one book. When an authoress told Wordsworth that she had spent six hours on a poem, he replied that he would have spent six weeks. Bishop

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Hall spent thirty years on one of his works. Owen worked on his commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews twenty years. What the world wants is men who have the nerve and grit to work and wait, whether the world applaud or not. It wants a Bancroft who can spend twenty-six years on the "History of the United States." It wants a Noah Webster who can devote thirty-six years to a dictionary of the language. It wants a Gibbon who can plod for twenty years on the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." It wants a Farragut, a Von Moltke, a Dewey, who have the persistence to work and wait for half a century to get ready for their first great opportunity. It wants a Field's untiring perseverance, spending years and a fortune laying his cable when all the world was calling him a fool. It wants a Titian's patience, spending seven long years on his "Last Supper"; a Stephenson's persistence, working fifteen years on his locomotive; a Watt's perseverance, toiling twenty years on his condensing engine.

But the same patience that is needed for success in secular callings is needed in the spiritual life as well. We never can expect a harvest of character or of life-results without first a seed-time of discipline and patient toil.

We need patience, too, because of the relationship we sustain to others. People are not all alike. Natures differ; feelings differ; opinions

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differ. We all have faults which must grieve our friends. But human patience, forbearance with one another, is the very life of love and of social well being. We need to be patient with our children, patient with the old, patient with the young, patient with our fellow-workers in the church, patient with our employees, patient with our employers. These inter-relationships of life are ever calling upon us for the exercise of this grace of patience and of persistent effort in the direction of good, and in the face of all possible discouragements.

We have need of patience, also, because of the fact that often the time of harvesting is so long delayed. Whatever field we walk in, secular, moral, or religious, we are tempted, like the children in Longfellow's tale, to dig up our plants after a few days to see if they are taking root. We are discontented if we do not see the results at once. We forget the patience of God. Great evils have been wrought in the Church by endeavors after a speedy harvest. Such is the cause of no small amount of the sensationalism and strained excitements that have afflicted the Church and ended in relapses. We need zeal and activity, but we need patience also to wait for the harvest.

When Judson was laboring in Burmah, unable at first to report conversions, to the desponding letters from the churches he replied, "Permit us to labor

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on in obscurity, and in twenty years you may hear from us again." And they did hear from him!

It is needful in our Christian work that we should assure our hearts over and over again with the knowledge that the results of real, faithful, wisely-put-forth effort is sure to last and live. The forced plant soon droops and dies. Forced harvests are barren harvests. It is only the real, the genuine, the honest, that lasts and lives. Such work is abiding. There is health in it. There is principle in it. There is permanence in it. Let us be patient for even a delayed harvest; it may be all the richer and fuller.

What is the way in which to get our need of Christian patience supplied? How are we to grow in this grace? One way is for us to consider all our trials, as in fact they are, the result of the goodwill of God. He proposes that which is best for us and makes our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, to work out for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Therefore we should strengthen our faith in the promises of the gospel and live in the daily exercise of that faith. God assures us that he will make all things to work together for our good. We should believe him and learn patience in the midst of trial.

We should carefully cultivate not only this faith in God, but also love for him. It is easy to submit to the will of one we love. When we "worship the sweet will of God and all his ways adore,"

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it becomes more natural for us to be patient. We should also often contemplate the great examples of patience. This will stimulate us to live in the same worthy way in which they lived. Then, too, we should constantly pray to God for this grace. Beza used to pray: "Lord, perfect that which thou hast begun in me, that I may not suffer shipwreck when I am almost at the haven." We have need of patience, that after we have done the will of God we might receive the promise, and we have daily need of praying for it more and more.

XXI

Honey-tipped Sins

Honey-tipped Sins

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines."

—Song of Sol. 2 : 15.

Henry M. Stanley tells us that when he was passing through the forests of Africa, the most formidable foes he encountered, those that caused the greatest loss of life to his caravan, and came near defeating his expedition, were the Wambutti dwarfs. These diminutive men had only little bows and arrows for weapons, so small that they looked like children's playthings, but upon the tip of each little arrow was a drop of poison which would kill an elephant or a man as surely and quickly as a rifle. Their defense was by means of poison and traps. They would steal through the dense forest, and waiting in ambush, let fly their arrows before they could be discovered. They dug ditches and carefully covered them over with sticks and leaves. They fixed spikes in the ground and tipped them with poison. Into these ditches and on these spikes man and beast would fall or step to death. One of the strangest things about it was that their poison was made of honey.

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It is thus that the Evil One wages his destructive warfare against God's people. Stealthily, under cover of darkness, by treachery, with weapons seemingly harmless, through the sweets of life, he comes clothed as an "angel of light." Yet how deadly are the little honey-coated sins which he administers! How sure the destruction of him who is deceived into wandering from the strait and narrow way!

What are some of these sins usually thought of as little sins? There are sins which by comparison with great sins men call little. Ill-temper in family life, at school, and in commercial and church relations; a light and frivolous spirit; slandering and backbiting; vanity and folly in dress; indulgence in hurtful amusements; careless and impure conversation; pride, etc. There are a host of these "little foxes" we might easily find.

What is the harm they do? They injure our consciences by hardening them; they keep us from feeling the sweet companionship of Christ; they grieve the Holy Spirit; and especially, they make way for greater sins.

There is an Indian story of a morsel of a dwarf, who asked the king to give him all the ground he could cover with three strides. The king, seeing him so small, said, "Certainly." Whereupon the dwarf suddenly shot up into a tremendous giant, covering all the land with the first stride, all the

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water with the second, and with the third he knocked the king down and took his throne.

It is said that a man one day strolling along in the country happened to see a magnificent golden eagle flying bravely upward toward the sky. He watched it with delight and admiration as it so strongly mounted upward, but presently he saw that something was wrong with it. It seemed unable to go any higher. Soon it began to fall, and presently it lay at his feet a lifeless mass. What could be the matter? No human hand had harmed it. No sportsman's shot had reached it. He went and examined the bird, and what did he find? It had carried up with it a little weasel in its talons, and as it had drawn its talons nearer to its body, for flight, the little creature had wormed itself partly out of them and had drunk the life-blood from the eagle's breast.

How like this it is with sin ! It may appear a very little thing one is at first tempted to do, but presently it fastens upon the soul and works death and destruction.

How must little sins be dealt with? Not tenderly, not connivingly, but they must be "taken." We must watch against and pray against and fight against even the smallest of them, or by and by, we will be overcome of sin and fall into utter ruin. Look out ! Make no place in your life for so-called minor evils. Sometimes honey-tipped sins prove the most destructive.

XXII

Every Man His Own Paradise

Every Man His Own Paradise

*“A good man shall be satisfied from himself.”—Prov.
14 : 14.*

There is a French proverb which says that “When a man does not find repose in himself it is vain for him to seek it elsewhere.” The same can be said of happiness. When a man does not find happiness in himself it is vain for him to seek it elsewhere. “A good man shall be satisfied from himself.”

Notice, it is not said that a good man shall be satisfied with himself. There is a wide distinction between the two ideas. The truly good man is the last man to be satisfied with himself. In the measure of his goodness every such man is discontented with his own conscious attainment. This noble discontent is a mark of his growth in goodness. Indeed, only those who are bad are self-satisfied and self-conceited. On the other hand, a man that is really good will be the last person to be conscious of the fact. If you come to the best man with the title of Good, he will answer you in the words of our Saviour when he said, “There is none good but One. That is God.”

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But this proverb does not even refer to the idea of a good man calling himself good, and indulging in a false self-satisfaction. It simply states a fact, that "a good man shall be satisfied from himself." In other words, that the good man's happiness wells up from within ; his righteous qualities become to him like a well of water in him, springing up into everlasting life, refreshing and blessing himself as it refreshes and blesses others. The good man carries with him his own paradise, just as the wicked man carries with him his own punishment. For let us not forget that unhappiness, as well as happiness, is also from within. In a true sense each evil doer must exclaim, "Which way I turn is hell, myself am hell." Every man is his own paradise. His true self is the good man's own content.

It was this same deep and precious truth that was uttered by Christ when he said, "The kingdom of God is within you." "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation : (that is, it is not an outward, showy, external thing to be gazed upon with astonished eyes) ; neither shall they say, Lo here or, lo there ! (pointing out its external magnificence), for, behold," says he, "the kingdom of God is within you."

Again this proverb shows very plainly the utter futility of some of the false sources of hap-

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piness which we are liable to seek. For example, the vast majority of mankind think that to be rich is to be happy. But there could be no greater mistake. There is, to be sure, no virtue in being poor, and it may be a pleasant and very convenient thing to have wealth ; but there is no standard by which a man can conclude when he is really rich, and wealth itself has no inherent power to make a single mortal of us happy. Men in all ages have sought in vain to find happiness in riches, for great wealth and luxury are not a characteristic of the twentieth century alone.

Aspicius spent two millions and a half in dissipation, and then poisoned himself for fear his remaining four hundred thousand dollars would not keep him from want. Cleopatra dissolved in vinegar a pearl worth four hundred thousand dollars and gave it to the enchanted Antony to drink at an entertainment given in his honor. Esopas spent four hundred thousand dollars on a single dish at a banquet. Caligula spent four hundred thousand dollars for one supper. The ordinary cost of a banquet of Lucullus was one hundred thousand dollars. Cræsus was worth only about seventeen million, which is about the yearly income of one man in America. And he was no more happy than Xerxes, who, not content with enormous armies and fleets and wealth that was fabulous, offered a reward to the inventor of a new pleasure.

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Neither does happiness consist in fame and worldly honors, as so many think. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Burke said that he would not give a peck of refuse wheat for all that is called fame in the world. Byron confessed that his life had been wretched, and he longed to rush into the thickest of the battle and end his existence with sudden death. Goethe had wealth and genius, yet he says that he never experienced five weeks of genuine pleasure. There is a Persian story of a great king, who, being out of spirits, consulted his astrologers, and was told that happiness could be found by wearing the shirt of a perfectly happy man. The court and the homes of all the prosperous classes were searched in vain. No such man could be found. At last a common laborer was found to fulfill the conditions ; he was absolutely happy, but, alas ! the remedy was as far off as ever ; the man had no shirt !

Neither is happiness to be found in the pursuit of pleasure. Indeed, happiness sought is seldom found. People forget that the kingdom of God is within, that when a man cannot find happiness within himself it is vain for him to seek it elsewhere. It does not exist anywhere else ; not in wealth ; not in houses ; not in lands ; not in fame. It will not yield up its treasures to the selfish seeker, nor can it be touched with unwashed hands. Happiness, it has been said, is a mosaic composed of very small stones. Each taken singly

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may be of little value ; but when all are grouped together, combined and set, they form a pleasing and graceful whole—a costly jewel. Every man is his own paradise or he has no paradise. You do not need to go from home to find it. If you are miserable and gloomy, go where you will, your jaundice and spleen will get there first.

“In your hearts are the birds and the sunshine,
In your thoughts the brooklets flow.”

“Happiness,” it has well been said, “is a thing to be practiced, like a violin.” Happiness dwells in performed duty, and nowhere else. A good old minister, near the end of his life, was joining a young couple in marriage, and, speaking of the matter of happiness, he said to them: “Take an old man’s advice. If you seek happiness you will not find it. Do your duty in life and happiness will come of itself.” Happiness is a good deal like what is said of the presidency of the United States, not for those who toil for it. Happiness sought is not obtained. It is to be found indirectly. Be good and do good ; then happiness will come of itself.

XXIII

Lives That Lift

Lives That Lift

"Who went about doing good."—Acts 10 : 38.

Christ is the supreme example of a beneficent life. The world was benighted and he came to illumine it. The world was miserable and he came to bless it. The world was enslaved and he came to emancipate it. The world was lost and he came to save it.

His mercy, too, respected both the bodies and the souls of men. He healed all manner of diseases, restored the lame, unstopped the ears of the deaf, loosed the tongues of the dumb, gave eyesight to the blind, removed lunacy, expelled demons from those possessed of them, and cleansed the loathsome lepers. But he regarded the souls of men also. He taught the doctrines of the gospel, forgave sins, healed spiritual diseases, and transformed men from darkness to light and gave them peace and joy and hope through believing.

Moreover, the mercy and beneficence of Christ were extended to all classes and grades of suffering humanity. A military officer's servant is sick and, at the dignitary's request, he healed him.

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A nobleman pleads on behalf of his son, and he replies, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." These are persons of distinction; but behold a poor Syrophenician woman seeks his help for her daughter, and having tried her faith, he exclaims, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" or two blind beggars moan their piteous cry for mercy, and he restores their sight. In other words, "He went about doing good."

Now, that is what we are to do, try to make our lives like his, to go about doing good.

There is an interesting story told of old Oliver Cromwell. He was, as we know, a staunch Puritan, and could not brook the least approach to Popery. "What are these?" he inquired, as his eyes fell upon a dozen silver statues in the niches of a chapel. "The twelve apostles," replied the trembling dean. "Take them down. Take them down," said Cromwell, "and coin them into money, so that the apostles, like their Master, may go about doing good."

Whatever we may think about the advisability of having the little silver images coined, this we know, that the aim of the Christian should be, like his Master, to go about doing good. We should consciously aim and strive to live lives that lift.

What are some of the elements that go to make up such a life—a life that lifts? The life that lifts is a sympathetic life. We do not place first that it must be a Christian life, for that we assume.

Lives That Lift

What we have to say is specifically addressed to those who are already Christians. We do not assume, either, that this grace of sympathy takes rank as the first and most important. But if not the most important it certainly is important.

Before the advent of Christ the world did not know very much about the meaning of sympathy. A stranger was always counted an enemy, and when one visited the villages the dogs were set upon him. The unfortunate and the sick were believed to be the victims of the gods, and he who interfered on their behalf was accounted guilty of sacrilege. But Jesus changed all this by his sympathy for suffering humanity. He went about doing good to both the bodies and the souls of men, and soon his spirit and the spirit of his gospel began to change the world. There is beauty in a sympathetic life. There is loveliness in a sympathetic life. There is wonderful helpfulness in a sympathetic life. Let us cultivate sympathy! It can be cultivated. But there is danger of our losing it as we grow older,—as we get used to seeing sorrow and suffering and pain. But it is also a grace that can be increased in us, year by year,—one that may grow stronger as we grow older. Let us cultivate it if we would live a life that lifts.

Again, the life that lifts is a cheerful, hopeful life. People who are not cheerful repel rather than help. They do not get near enough to others

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to help them. Others will not come near enough to them to make it possible for them to help. Neither can unhelpful and discouraged people help others.

We read the advice of an eminent physician the other day. It was addressed to women, in regard to their visits to the sick. It emphasized the importance of being cheerful, and looking bright and beautiful, even as to dress. He said to be sure to put on a pretty dress, and some ornaments, a bright ribbon here and there, and to go only when well enough to look hopeful and well and to speak with a cheerful, buoyant voice. If we would live lives that lift we must cultivate a cheerful, hopeful disposition—doing it for the sake of others.

We need scarcely add that the life that lifts is a pure life. A pure life always has an influence for good. It may be unconsciously, but it is nevertheless powerfully, exerted. "How did you become so sweet?" was asked of the scented clay. "Oh, I dwelt so long in the sweet society of the rose that I became like the rose," was the answer. The clay and the rose had been laid away in a drawer together. Good people make us better, just to be in their company. A pure life tells. So does an impure one. There is a contagion from impurity. Some people make us worse just in being with them. But a pure life is always a lifting life. One upright man or woman helps others to be up-

Lives That Lift

right. One honest man in business helps all other men to be honest in business. There is a gracious contagion flowing out from purity, sincerity, earnestness and honesty. Let us cultivate genuineness, soundness of heart, that our influence may be felt in an uplifting way !

The life that lifts is a spiritual life. It is certain that we cannot lead people any nearer to heaven's gate than we go ourselves. We must live near to God, spiritual lives, if we would live uplifting lives. What is a spiritual life ? What is it to be spiritually minded ? It is just to have "the mind of the Spirit," to love the things he loves, and hate the things he hates.

There is a remarkable teaching power in a spiritual life. That is one reason why we like to be with spiritual people—they teach us so much. It was once asked of an aged saint : " Why is it that Mr. B. knows so much about religion and spiritual things ? " The answer was : " Oh, he lives so near to heaven's gates that he hears many things that we who stay farther away can never hear. " Yes, spiritual Christians do live so near to heaven's gate that they hear many things we who live farther away cannot hear, and that is the reason they have such a power to teach us and influence us, the reason their lives are such lifting lives.

They not only teach, but they also inspire. A young lady, a student in one of our leading colleges, came to us the other day all aglow with

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happiness and holy resolve from a few minutes spent in the company of and intimate conversation with a truly spiritual woman.

Be sympathetic. Be unselfish. Be cheerful. Be hopeful. Be pure. Be spiritual. Look up and you will live up. Live up and you will lift up.

XXIV

Reaching Perfection

Reaching Perfection

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”—Eph. 4 : 13.

A high ideal is a help to a high life. The ideal the Bible places before us is the perfection of the character of Christ.

Not long since we saw the question : “What is the largest room in the world?” The answer was given : “Room for improvement.” Every one aspiring to good becomes conscious that a large degree of improvement is necessary before his character even begins to be what it ought to be. But it is a happy fact that this dissatisfaction is the first step in improvement. Dissatisfaction with the slow coach led to the railroad train. Dissatisfaction with steam led to the telegraph. Just so dissatisfaction with present character attainments always leads to improvement. It is when Paul says, “I count not myself to have apprehended,” that he also says, “I press toward the mark.” When our ideal is to reach the measure of “perfect manhood,” and we see how much room for growth there is, it is then we redouble our

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efforts to develop the manhood we already have.

Another effect of possessing this ideal ought to lead us to modify our judgment of our fellow-Christians. Seeing our own faults and failings ought to make us considerate of the faults and failings of others.

“Before you mark another's sin
Bid thine own conscience look within.”

If, despite my faults, I am yet conscious of being a sincere Christian, why may not others, notwithstanding their faults, be equally sincere? To be sure, our failings may be different in kind, but if I give way to temper, why need I count myself better than my neighbor who gives way to the love of money, or the temptation of deceit? One flower never displays the beauties of the whole floral kingdom; so one Christian may not show forth every grace. Yet each may be true at heart, and strive to do right.

These principles followed up would remove the popular objections of many to Christianity and the Church. If no human being is perfect, and the church visible is made up of human beings, then the church visible must be imperfect. It is unreasonable to expect a perfect organization out of parts all imperfect. It is not religion that is the matter with the Church, it is the lack of it.

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The Church is not a body of people professing perfection, but a body of people confessing the need of divine grace and help. It is our conscious imperfections that drive us to God. Christianity has imperfect followers, but that is nothing against the system. That the pupil makes crooked marks in writing is no ground of criticism of the perfect copy.

These considerations ought to lead us to look away from the imperfect and incomplete to the real perfection—from man to the Son of Man, from the saved to the Saviour. What artist would copy a copy when he might be copying the original masterpiece? No wonder men do not arrive at any high degree of perfection when “measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves.” That, the apostle says, “is not wise.” What then is the perfect standard? Nothing less than the character of Christ. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” If you aim to be like some man you may succeed, but like an imperfect model, you will still be imperfect. Copy Christ. He is the standard. Like artists before some great painting, endeavoring to reproduce its lines and features and beauty, so should we try to transfer, one by one, the lines and features of the character of Christ, making them our own. Only so can we hope to approach a perfect manhood. Study Christ as the architect does his drawings. Follow Christ as

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the cutter does his pattern. Reproduce Christ as the sculptor does his model. Resist to-day's sins. Do to-day's duties. Live to-day at your best. Imitate Christ. Grow in grace every day, if only a little. Christian character is a mosaic. Each day sets a little stone. It does not show much progress in growth or beauty, but the finished work will be beautiful. Let us strive so to live that we will gradually approach toward perfection, "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

XXV

“Well Tried”

“Well Tried”

“Thou didst well that it was in thine heart”—I Kings 8: 18.

David is wrapped in deep meditation. He has recently finished a beautiful palace for himself, and the recollection of his humble birth and of the magnificence of his present abode suggests to him the idea of building a beautiful temple for Jehovah. He sends for the prophet Nahum and communicates his purpose. The prophet, greatly gratified, approves of the proposition at once.

But that night the prophet had a vision, and the divine message was given that while God was pleased to see the purpose of his servant David to build a temple, yet, because David had been a man of war, he was not to build it. “Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house.” David was permitted to gather the materials for the work, but his son Solomon was to build the temple.

Here is revealed a very encouraging fact, namely, that God sees and recognizes even an unaccom-

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plished purpose. God knows when we plan and purpose and strive to do some service for him, even if we fail.

A little daughter of the tenements, whose mother was done at last with the work and worry that had killed her, was left, at fourteen years of age, with four younger ones to mother and nurse. Faithful to her trust, she scrubbed and washed and cooked and mended until the slender shoulders bent and the thin face grew white, and almost before anyone noticed her much, the little broken life lay waiting for release. "I haven't been able to do anything," she whispered to her favorite girl friend, who lived just round the corner; "I couldn't go to school because of the work, or to Sunday school because it took all father could spare to keep the others in clothes. When the minister came to see me he said I'd soon see Jesus, but I'm afraid I haven't done anything good, and I don't know anything to say to him." "And you needn't try to say anything," said the other, "not a single word," kissing the little, pitiful face. "When you see him look at you, you just show him your hands."

The two friends, Franz Knigstein and Albrecht Dürer, did not both become great painters, but the name of Knigstein will be remembered as long as Dürer's, through the wonderful picture, "The Folded Hands." When Knigstein saw the picture he said, "Why, those are my own hands!"

“Well Tried”

“Yes,” said Dürer, “I took them as you stood making the sad surrender of your life so bravely. I said to myself, ‘Those hands which can never paint a picture can now most certainly make one.’ I have faith in those hands, my brother-friend. They will go to men’s hearts in the days to come.”

It is a fact, too, that the good work we purpose must sometimes be put into other hands. David’s plan was a good one, but it was Solomon who was to carry it out. David did not fly into a violent passion of disappointed feeling. He accepted God’s decision joyously, and set about doing the portion of the work that was permitted him. He was glad to have anything to do with a work so grand and holy. This should be our attitude. What can it matter who erects the upper courses of a building when the lower courses are just as necessary and just as honorable? Is God not worshiped by the edifice as a whole? “Herein is that saying true, ‘One soweth, and another reapeth.’ Both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.”

God rewards us just the same, as if accomplished, when we plan and purpose and strive to do some service for him and fail. He sees the issue of every right purpose and thought. In his wisdom he may commit the harvesting to another. But the faithful sower shall be recompensed just as if he had been permitted to gather the sheaves.

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The parent who does his whole duty by his children shall receive a faithful parent's blessing, even if some of his children do not turn out as he would like. The Christian worker who goes forth "weeping," casting in the precious seed in faith, "shall come again rejoicing," even if another does enter into his labors.

A good many years ago the Rev. Dr. Charles S. Robinson preached a sermon in the Central Church, Boston, in the course of which he repeated the verse :—

" Oh, how many a glorious record
Had the angels of me kept,
Had I done instead of doubted,
Had I warred instead of wept !"

He asked the congregation to repeat it after him, and added, " You may forget the sermon, but do not forget the verse." Some years afterwards, in reply to a private letter from a prominent Boston lawyer, in which he alluded to the verse and its help to him and to others, Dr. Robinson wrote : " I remember the sermon and my little verse. It gives more joy than I can describe to know I help somebody. Sometimes I think the highest reward I shall get in heaven will be the words, not exactly, ' Well done,' but ' Well tried.' But now and then some thoughtful, generous body, like you, comes along and says, ' Well, when you tried that time, you did.' So I try again." Let us try again, and keep on trying.



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